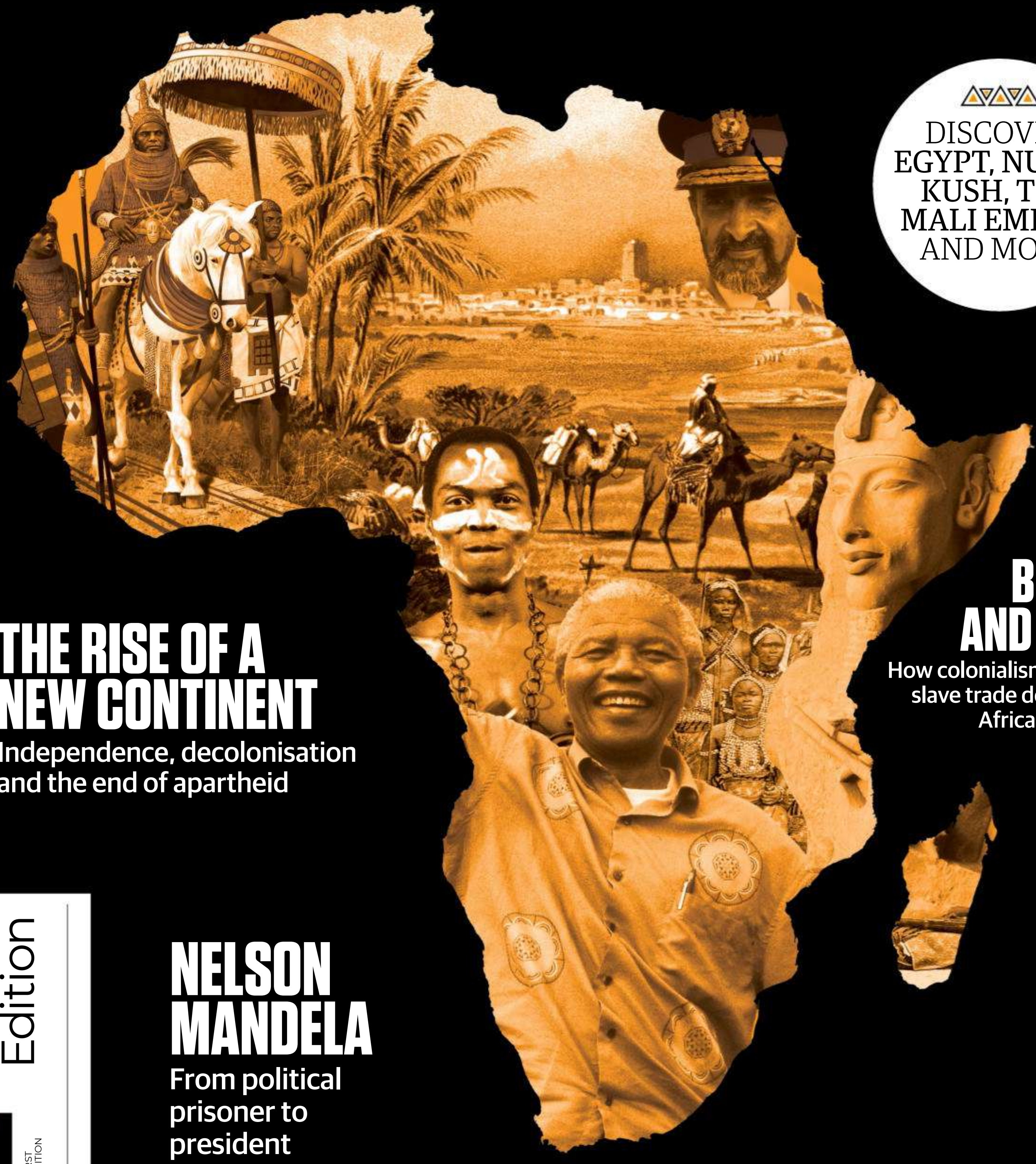
NEW

HISTORY OF AFRICA

FROM THE CRADLE OF HUMANITY TO THE 21ST CENTURY



DISCOVER EGYPT, NUBIA, KUSH, THE MALI EMPIRE AND MORE

BLOOD AND RUIN

How colonialism and the slave trade decimated African nations

THE RISE OF A NEW CONTINENT

Independence, decolonisation and the end of apartheid

NELSON MANDELA

From political prisoner to president

Digital Edition

FIRST EDITION

HISTORY OF AFRICA

No single book could ever cover the history of Africa in its entirety. Even the great libraries of Timbuktu would be hard pushed to sum up the long, complex, sometimes brutal history of the continent that holds both humanity's oldest home and the world's youngest country. Africa's history is ancient, nuanced and complicated. This book, then, is by way of an introduction. You'll notice that some events you might be expecting aren't present – the Boer Wars for example. While this book does address the beginnings of and the ongoing legacy of colonialism, it prioritises shining a light on the histories of Black heroes and civilisations from antiquity and medieval history, and how their modern-day descendents are working to decolonialise their continent and help Africa to once again become the shining beacon of civilisation that it was before. On this journey through some of the highlights of African history from prehistory to the present, you'll meet powerful kings, wicked sorcerers, pirates, pharaohs, forgotten kingdoms, warrior women and much more.

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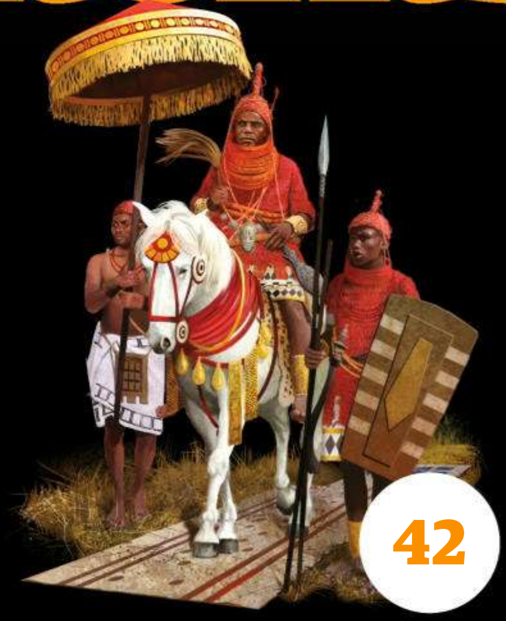

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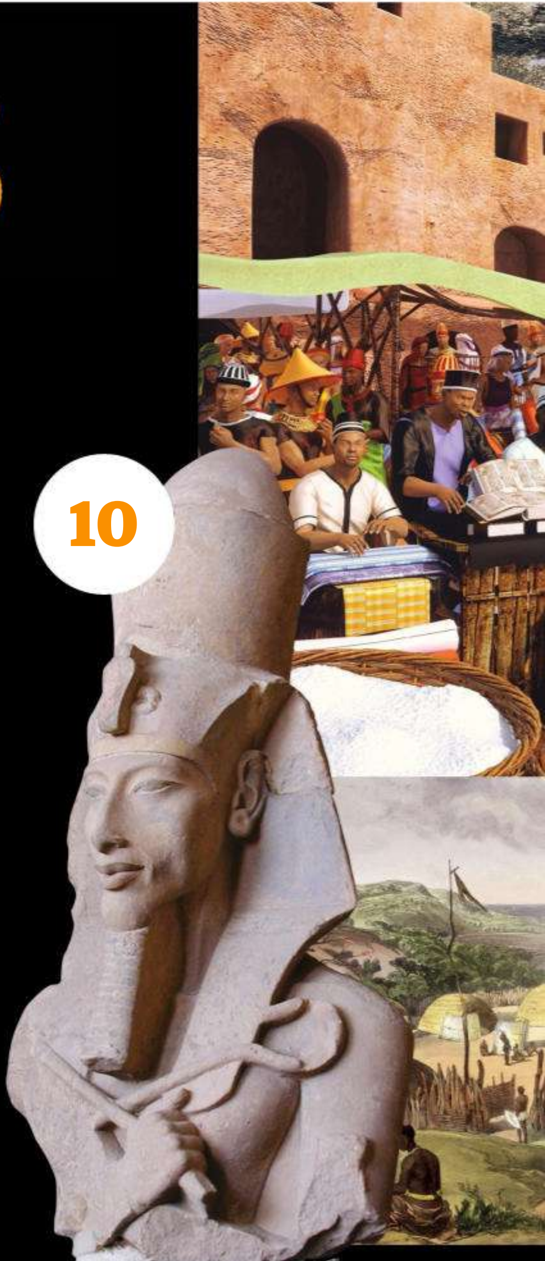

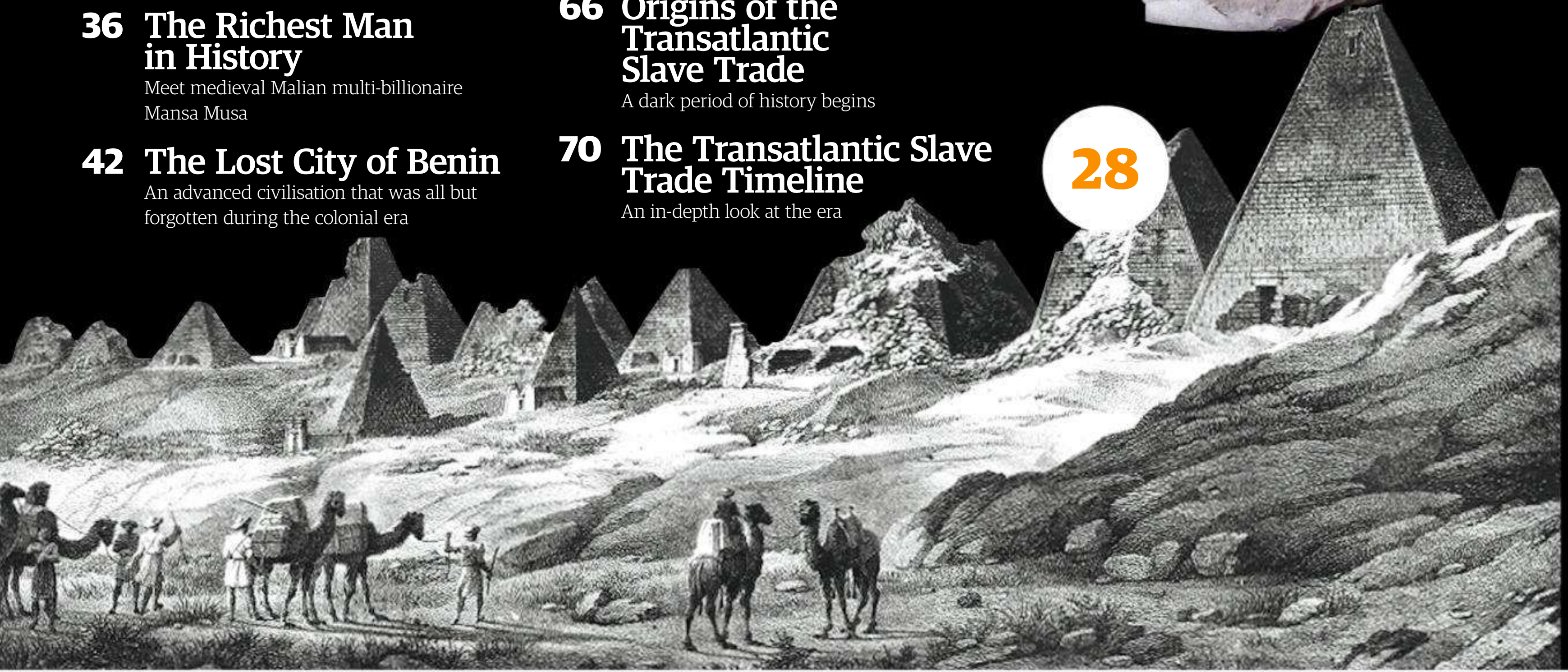

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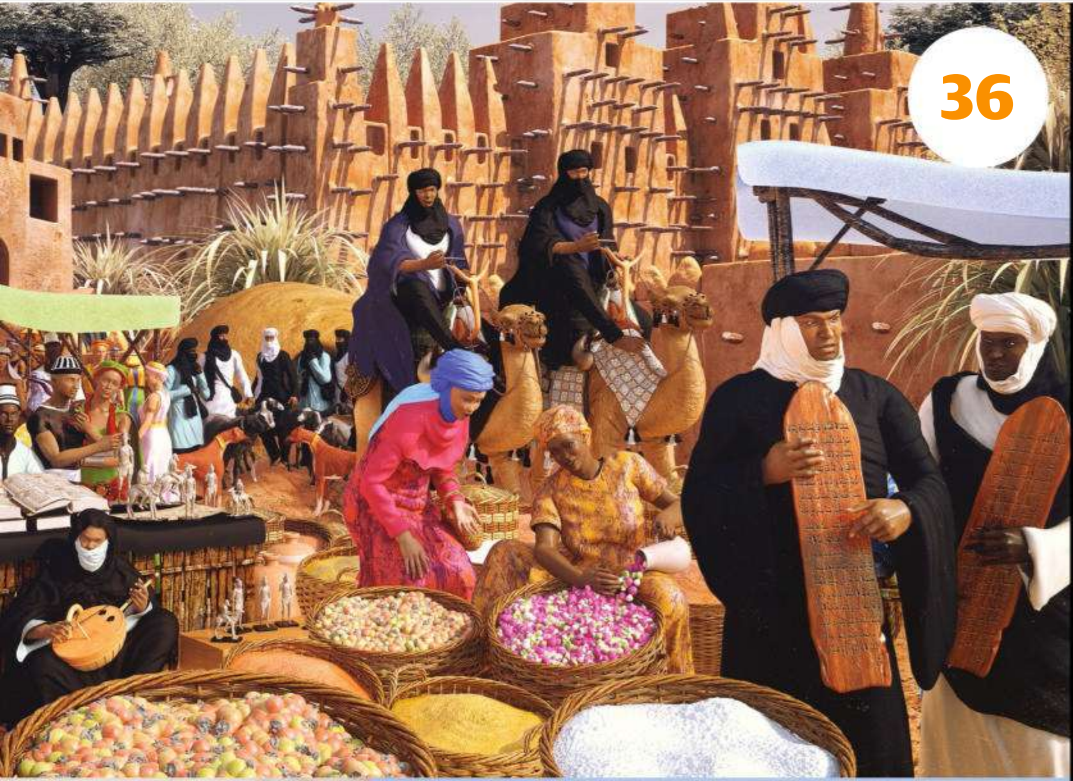

Ancient

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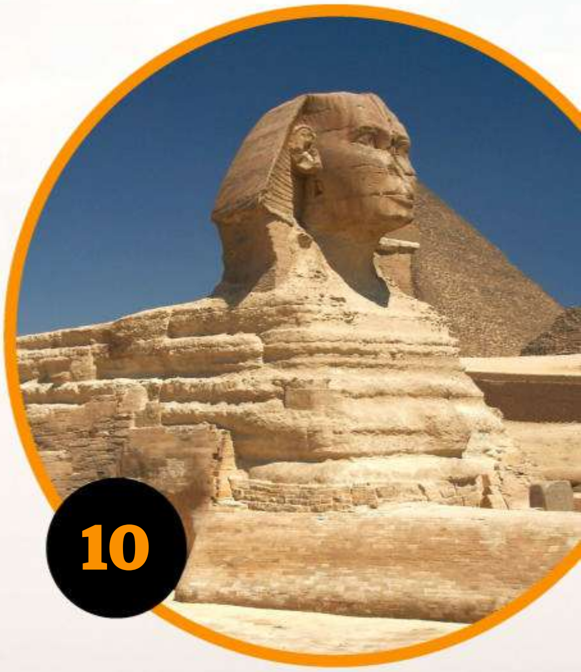

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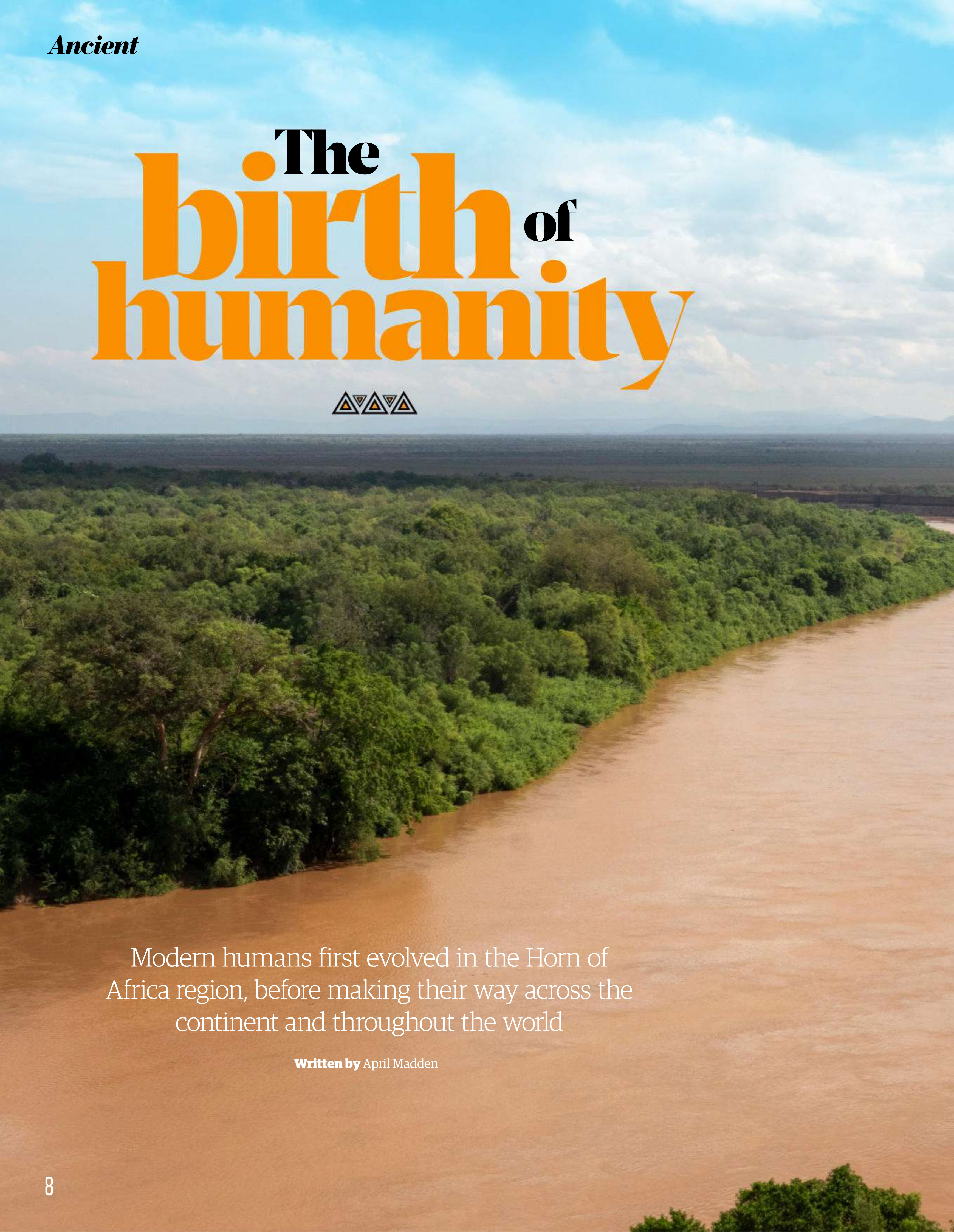


The birth of humanity

Modern humans first evolved in the Horn of Africa region, before making their way across the continent and throughout the world

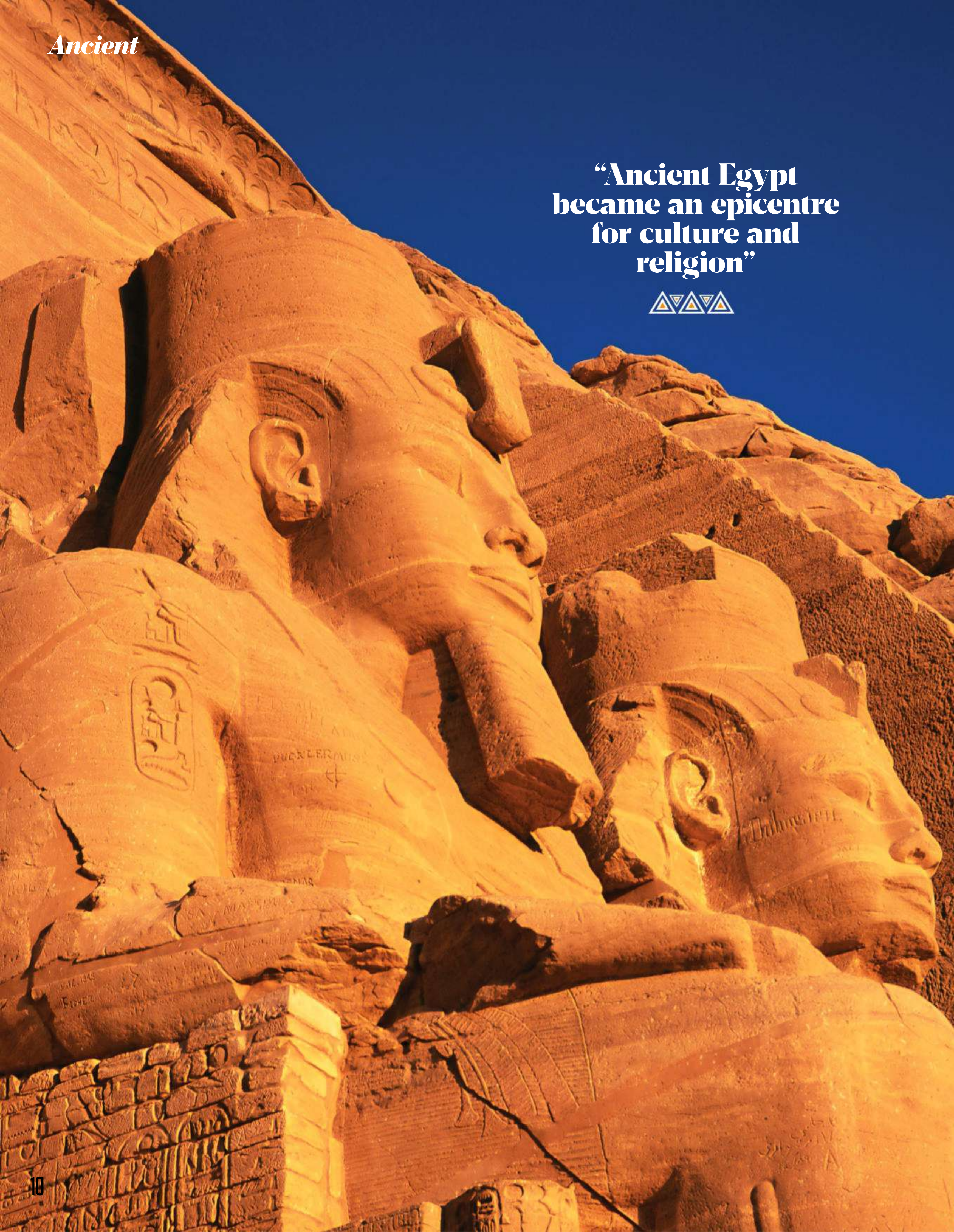
Written by April Madden

On the mid-eastern coast of the African continent, a peninsula juts out into the sea. The Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden separate it from the Middle Eastern countries of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, while thousands of miles eastwards across the ocean lies India. Behind it to the west, the vast width of the African continent stretches towards the South Atlantic. Here, in a landscape of mountains and plains, where the weather can vary between monsoon rains and dry trade winds, where the lowland heat can hit 50C (122F) in places but the plateaus can offer sunny green climes, is the crucible in which humanity was formed.

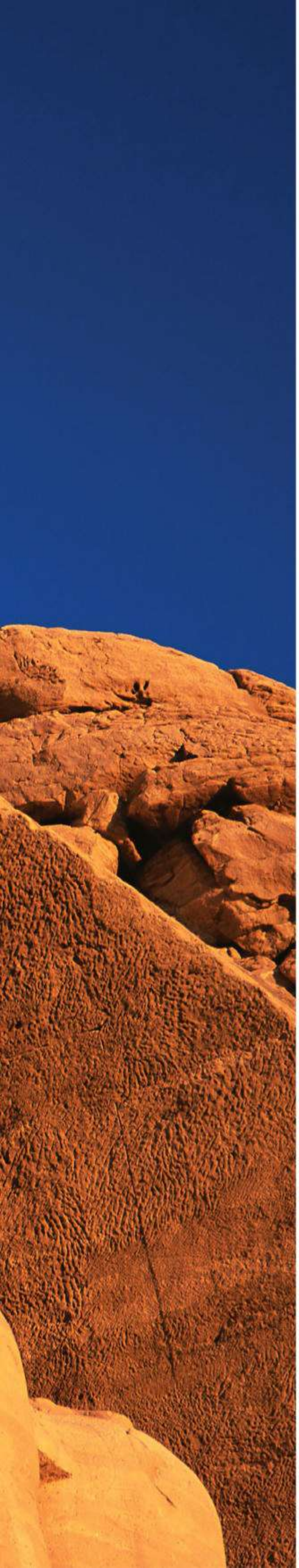
It's thought that homo sapiens, modern humans, evolved in the Horn of Africa region between 200,000 and 300,000 years ago. Some of the earliest fossils of our ancestors have been unearthed in the region. The Omo remains, named for their discovery near the Omo river in southwestern Ethiopia, is a collection of ancient human bones in which modern human features can be found alongside features from an earlier species of human. In 2022, the Omo remains were dated to approximately 233,000 years old. The earth layer around them suggests these early modern humans enjoyed a lush, rainy climate in which the Nile and the nearby Omo river flowed high and freely, while the scant traces of tools that accompanied them suggest a technological level in eastern Africa's Middle Stone Age. During this era, the local human population would have benefitted from abundant food, which they hunted and gathered with a range of stone and bone tools that showcase the planning, abstract thinking and innovative behaviours that characterise the evolution of modern humans. They were also creative, making art by carving stones and shells, painting with red ochre, and even adorning themselves with beads. Needles and hide-working tools suggest early modern eastern African humans from this period were creating shelters or clothing from the skins of the animals they hunted with arrows and spears, and making fishing nets to take advantage of the rich food sources in the nearby rivers and seas. It's likely that at this point they were using complex spoken language to describe and plan their activities, thoughts and feelings.

While the 'Out of Africa' hypothesis for the spread of modern humans across the world is now thought of as a long, drawn-out series of migratory events that happened in waves rather than one significant dispersal, this – the place the ancient Egyptians called Ta Netjeru, the 'land of God' – is where the people that went on those world-changing migrations first began their lives.

The verdant shores of Ethiopia's Omo river are the site of one of the earliest fossil records of modern humans



“Ancient Egypt became an epicentre for culture and religion”



Kingdoms of Ancient Egypt

Spanning many eras, the New, Middle and Old Kingdoms would see the pharaohs reach the peak of their power and Egyptian culture soar

For 3,000 years the Ancient Egyptian empire endured. It emerged, like so many other independent kingdoms, from the ruins of warring and fragmented fiefdoms and grew into a nation that shook North Africa and the surrounding world to its core. It became an epicentre for culture and religion, where science and magic were intertwined as one. But those golden ages, those heights of human achievement that challenged even those of Greece and Rome at their peaks, were not achieved in a day.

Before the Assyrians came, before the Persians invaded, before the Greeks conquered and the Romans annexed, the Egyptians rose and fell all by themselves. While darker periods would form between them (three in fact, known as the Intermediate Periods), the timeline of Ancient Egypt has been defined by three distinct eras: the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom. A time of cultural rebirth and monumental construction, it was during the Old Kingdom that iconic structures that have endured millennia were built. The Middle Kingdom was when a nation was unified and forged anew. Then the realm was aggressively expanded and culture fostered like never before in the New Kingdom.

Ancient Egypt wasn't just an era of military conquest and expansion, it was a time of innovation too. The Egyptians invented early forms of cosmetics, including eye makeup; they were one of the first civilisations (alongside Mesopotamia) to evolve a robust written language; they created papyrus thousands of years before the Chinese produced paper; they designed the basic calendar structure that we still use today; they can even lay claim to inventing bowling and early forms of breath mints.

In short, they were a nation the like of which we've never seen before or again. Gods, pharaohs, pyramids, mummification, agriculture and much more helped to define the Ancient Egyptians as one of human history's most fascinating and intelligent civilisations.

The invasions of Egypt led to new cultural aspects being embedded into society, such as the use of horses and chariots

FAMOUS FACES THROUGH TIME

Uncover the celebrities of each kingdom of this great civilisation

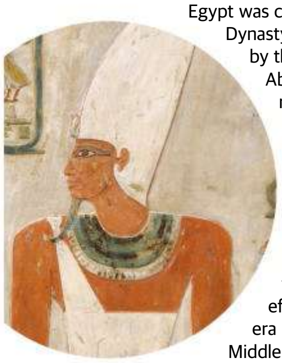
The Old Kingdom

Djoser c. 2670 BCE

Of all the kings that ruled Egypt in the infant years of the Old Kingdom, the pharaoh Djoser is perhaps the most influential. He may not have been the man who united Egypt as one in Narmer, but he typified two characteristics that would go on to define Ancient Egypt. He conducted military campaigns that solidified and expanded the borders of the empire while nurturing the growth of his nation's culture. He also commissioned the first pyramid on Egyptian soil; the Step Pyramid at Sakkara was the blueprint for pharaonic splendour and inspired future generations to build even greater examples.

The Middle Kingdom

Mentuhotep II 2061 BCE - 2010 BCE

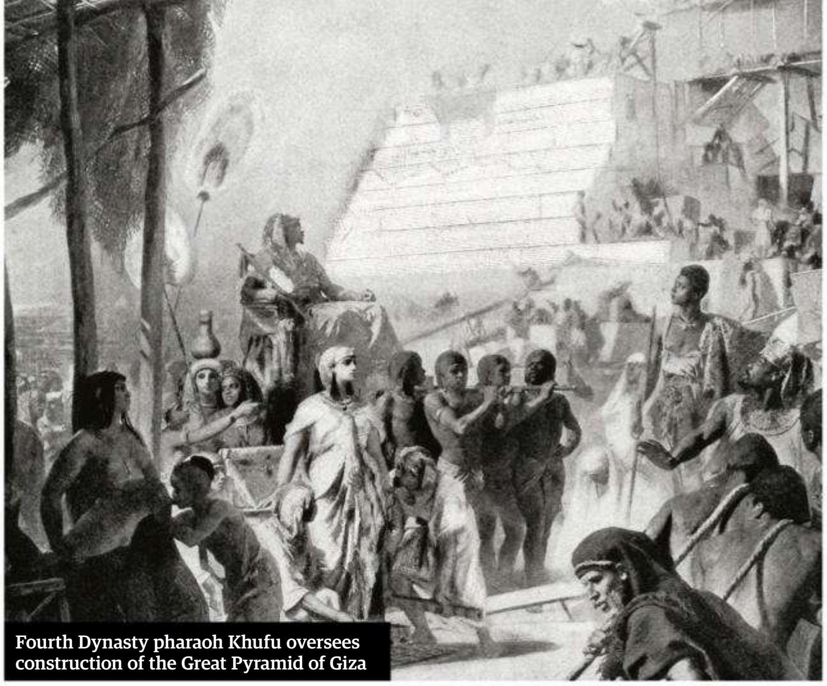


The kingdom splintered after the prosperity and expansion of the Old Kingdom. This mini dark age of sorts was known as the First Intermediate Period and saw Egypt divided by two competing dynasties. Lower Egypt was controlled by the Tenth Dynasty and Upper Egypt by the Theban Dynasty. About 14 years into his reign, Mentuhotep II had grown tired of the stalemate and attacked the Lower Egypt capital of Herakleopolis. He eventually broke the rival dynasty, unified the two realms and effectively founded the era now known as the Middle Kingdom.

The New Kingdom

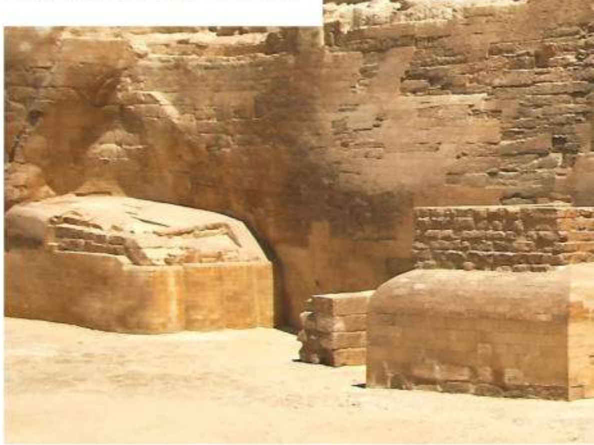
Ramesses II 1279 BCE - 1213 BCE

Tutankhamun may be the most recognisable pharaoh, but King Tut's reign was a speck of Egyptian sand compared the power, influence and achievement of Ramesses II. The third pharaoh of the 19th Dynasty, Ramesses II took an already prosperous kingdom and made it greater and grander than it had ever been. He expanded its borders, conquering Canaan and subduing everyone from the Nubians to the peoples of the Levant. He was also a prolific builder of monuments and temples and even went as far as constructing his very own capital city, Pi-Ramesses.



Fourth Dynasty pharaoh Khufu oversees construction of the Great Pyramid of Giza

Tomb art from the Old Kingdom



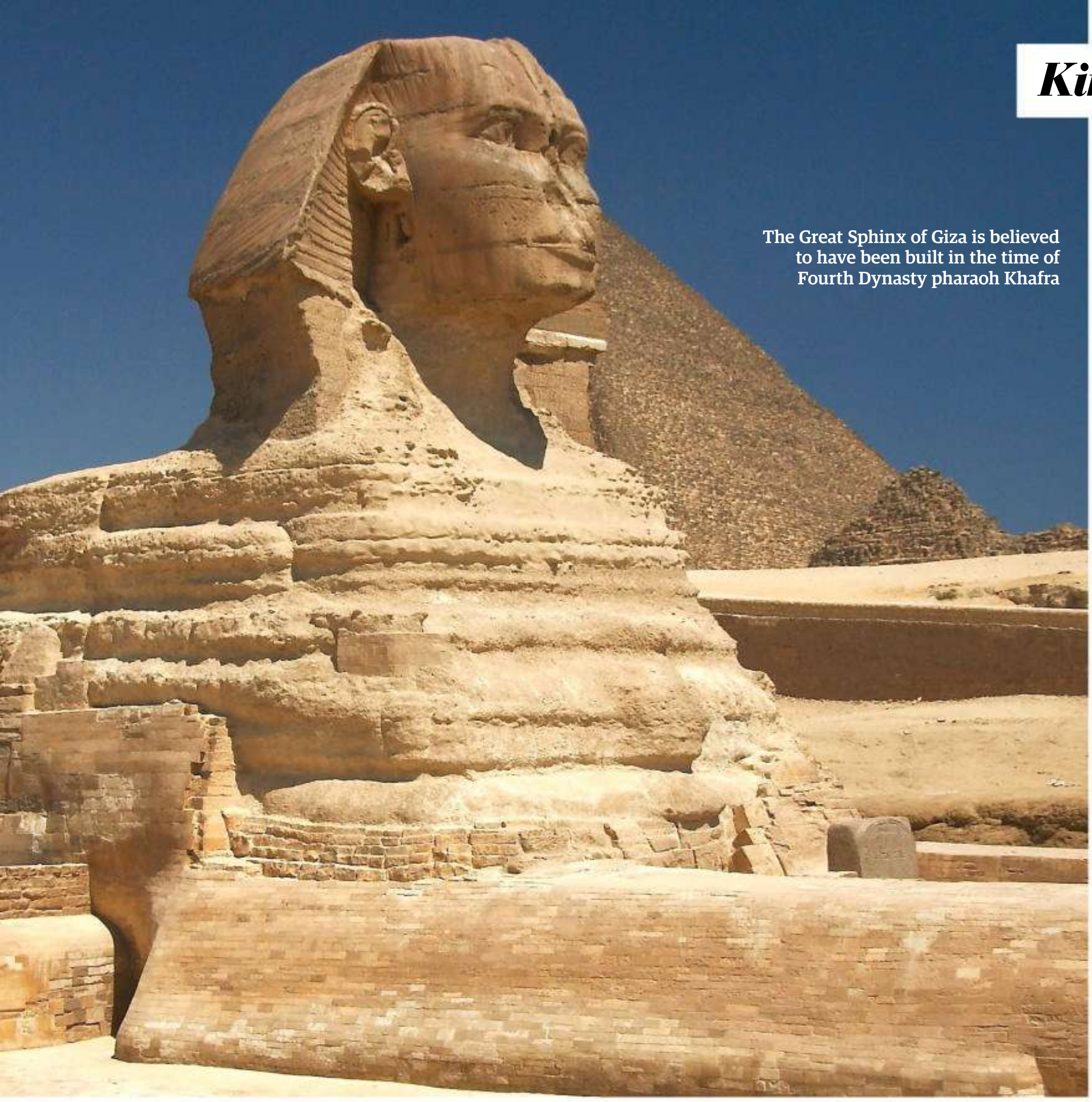
The Old Kingdom

A time of rebirth, the Old Kingdom saw the introduction of the first pharaoh, dynasty and pyramid to the world

Prior to the Old Kingdom, in an era known as the Predynastic, Prehistoric or Protodynastic Period, Egypt was going through something of a transformation. The nation was divided into colonies, each with their own lords and rulers. The north and south of the country were also distinct in both practices and culture, with Hierakonpolis the capital of the south and Bes the capital of the north.

Excavations over the last century have radically changed the way we view Egypt prior to the Old Kingdom, including the fact that the First Dynasty and the rise of Narmer was not an overnight process. Upper Egypt, the more affluent of the two states, had three main cities – Thinis, Nekhen and Naqada. One by one, these states conquered one another or merged, and by about 3100 BCE, Egypt emerged as one whole state with the warrior pharaoh Narmer at its head. Two dynasties followed his founding during a period known as the Early Dynastic Period, and it was here that the blueprint for the Old Kingdom was forged. Memphis became the capital and Abydos the religious epicentre. Even architecture and the arts began to approach the classical Egyptian form at this time. The Old Kingdom began in about 2686 BCE, with the formation of the Third Egyptian Dynasty. The term 'Old Kingdom' was introduced by 18th-century historians and is used broadly to signify the first of three peaks of Egyptian civilisation. Often referred to as the 'Age of the Pyramids', the Old Kingdom saw Egypt nurture every aspect that would make it great. From the Third Dynasty and its first pharaoh, Djoser, to the apparent last king of the Sixth, Netjerkare Siptah, the nation was transformed into a cultural and military powerhouse.

The pyramids are a symbol of this era, and the template for these monumental icons began in the reign of Djoser. His vizier and closest adviser, Imhotep (who would be deified in generations to come as a demigod and god of healing) was the architect behind the Pyramid of Djoser, and his designs were a significant leap in engineering in Ancient Egypt. Prior to Djoser, kings were buried in rectangular, flat-roofed tombs called mastabas, but the Third Dynasty's founder desired immortality in death by means of a tomb worthy of a divine ruler. Imhotep's revolutionary design, stacking squared versions of *mastabas* on top of



The Great Sphinx of Giza is believed to have been built in the time of Fourth Dynasty pharaoh Khafra

one another to create a pyramid, created the jewel in the king's rebuilt kingdom. A grand necropolis, a symbol of the enduring Ancient Egyptian reverence for death, surrounds it and the finished article would go on to inspire pharaohs for generations to come.

The grandeur of the Step Pyramid (the Pyramid of Djoser) at Sakkara wasn't lost on those who followed in Djoser's footsteps. By the time that the Fourth Dynasty kings were ruling over Egypt (2613 BCE - 2498 BCE), a new set of pyramids were forming. The Fourth Dynasty is considered the 'golden age' of the Old Kingdom, the very peak of prosperity. The economy was thriving thanks to a peaceful realm and open trade routes with its neighbouring nations. As with every peaceful period of Ancient Egypt, a spree of construction swept the nation.

Khufu, the second pharaoh of the Fourth Dynasty, was the man to create a monument so grand it would eventually be named one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the Great Pyramid of Giza. Built over a two-decade period, the 146.5 metre-high structure was a feat of engineering that put even Imhotep's Step Pyramid in Sakkara to shame. Giza would become the site of many more pyramids and temples, known as the Giza Necropolis. The Giza Pyramid became the pinnacle of pyramid design in Egypt and it would remain the tallest man-made structure for a staggering 3,800 years. It served as a testament to the power of the pharaohs and the enduring potency of the many Egyptian gods.

The Fifth Dynasty of Ancient Egypt (2498 BCE - 2345 BCE) saw an evolution of theological practices across the entire nation, with certain cults growing in prominence (gods rose and fell in popularity, and usually those favoured by a particular dynasty or geographically important location were able to survive obscurity). The Cult of Ra (god of the noon sun) and the Cult of Osiris (god of the afterlife) rose significantly in popularity during this period of time.

The Egyptian economy was also booming, with the influx of goods like ebony, gold, myrrh and frankincense growing all the time. The Egyptians pushed their trading boundaries even further with agreements with Lebanon and modern-day Somalia. In short, it was a time of enterprise without the fear of invasion or war. This economic strength bled into the Sixth Dynasty (2345 BCE - 2181 BCE), as did the growing popularity of the inscription of spells and incantations inside burial chambers and tombs. Known commonly as the Pyramid Texts, these inscriptions would form the basis of the *Book of the Dead*.

The Old Kingdom boasted a strong centralised administration from the capital of Memphis

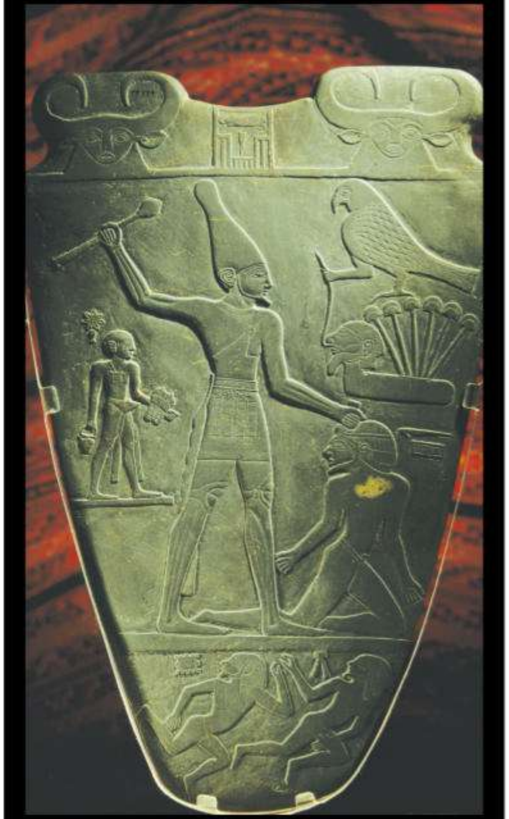
ANCIENT EGYPT'S FIRST PHARAOH

Who was the man who unified two distinctly different halves of the same realm and set the stage for the Old Kingdom period?

The Old Kingdom was the first true age of prosperity and progress for Egypt, but it would have been nothing without the two dynasties that came before it and the man who founded the pharaonic line to begin with. That man was Narmer and, much like many of the leaders and radicals who changed history in the post-neolithic world, he is a man steeped in myth, legend and mystery. Nevertheless, his actions and decisions at the beginning of the First Dynasty set the precedent for the 29 others that would follow.

Narmer ruled sometime during the 31st century BCE and became the first man to unite the states of Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. Of course, for an event that happened so far back in prehistory, most of the information we have comes from references found in tombs and the conclusions drawn by Egyptologists and historians, but there are some intriguing details we can take from them.

Seal impressions found in tombs at Abydos linked to the pharaohs Qa'a and Den (both of whom ruled, to the best of our knowledge, after Narmer during the First Dynasty) cite a list of ancient kings that name Narmer as the first. There have even been stone vessels (elaborate vases) found in the Step Pyramid tomb of Djoser that pay tribute to Narmer, perhaps expressing an intended connection with the founder and his way of life. Some historians argue that a ruler by the name of Menes was in fact the founder of founders, while others theorise Narmer and Menes were one and the same.



There's even an argument that Narmer is a pseudonym for the mysterious monarch King Scorpion, but currently no evidence exists to corroborate this claim

The Middle Kingdom

Once again divided and once again whole, Ancient Egypt rose from its own ashes to become a military and cultural powerhouse

For every period of greatness and monumental achievement in Ancient Egypt's history, there is a stretch of time where governments crumbled, territories divided and the nation fell into a dark lull. As the royal hold on the country fell apart towards the end of the Old Kingdom, Egypt was plunged into an era of uncertainty that is referred to as the First Intermediate Period.

To make matters worse, the power of the pharaoh was splintered when two rival dynasties began vying for power – the Tenth Dynasty (based in Herakleopolis, the principal city of Lower Egypt) and the 11th Dynasty (centralised in Thebes, Upper Egypt). This period of conflict and dissention lasted for 125 years, until the reign of Theban pharaoh Mentuhotep II.

Ascending to the Upper Egypt throne in 2055 BCE, Mentuhotep II watched as the Tenth Dynasty began to destabilise with in-fighting and regular riots. In his 14th year of regnal rule, the Theban king took full advantage of revolt and attacked Herakleopolis. By the time of his arrival, there was barely a battle to be had, and the city, and the rest of the region as a result, were taken. He quelled what little resistance could be offered by the remaining rulers of the decaying Tenth Dynasty then set about reunifying the kingdom as one.

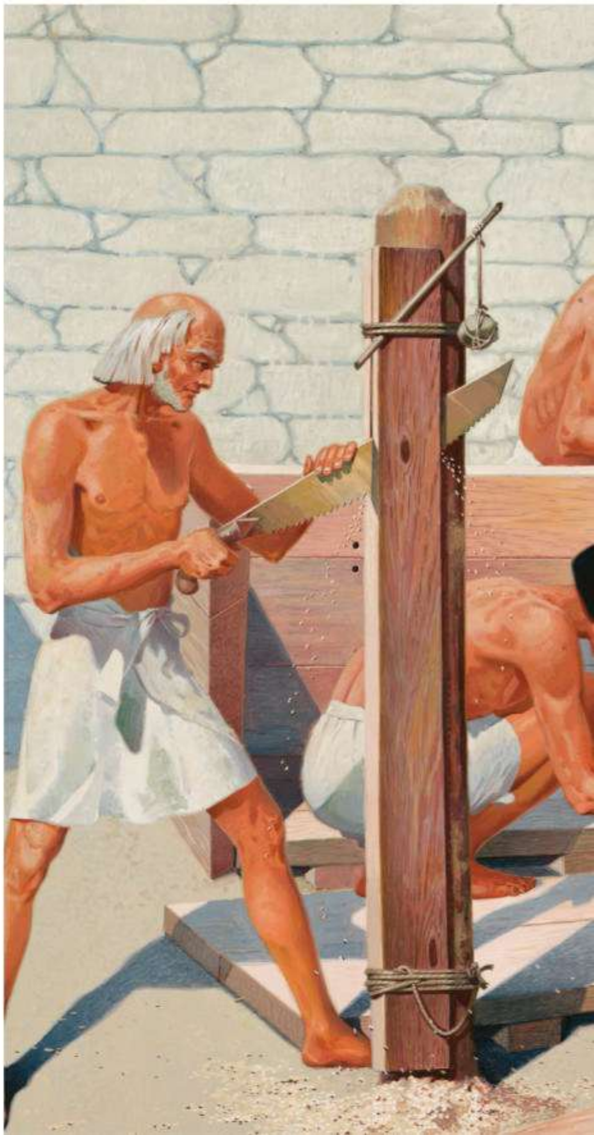
Such a task was not quick, taking a staggering 21 years to bring the Lower and Upper regions into line. He began by conducting a series of military campaigns to regain the territories lost during the dark time of the First Intermediate Period. He travelled south to the Second Cataract in Nubia, a region that had gained independence from its masters. Mentuhotep II brought the Nubians to heel before restoring Egyptian authority in the Sinai region. It was a ruthless expression of power in an era when authority was a long forgotten force.

His consolidation of power in Egypt and efforts towards unifying the nation ushered in what we now know as the Middle Kingdom, and that effort was continued by his son and successor Mentuhotep III. His rule was brief by pharaonic standards (a mere 12 years) but he further accelerated the unification, including an expedition to retake Punt (an old trading partner of Egypt). The throne then passed to Mentuhotep IV, whose reign remains something of a mystery. His name is often omitted from lists of kings found in tombs through the Middle and New Kingdoms, suggesting his rule was a short one and ended abruptly.

The *Turin Papyrus* (otherwise known as the *Turin King List*) is one such document; it describes the period following Mentuhotep III's death as "seven kingless years". Information regarding the 'missing king' remains frustratingly scarce, but some details suggest a coup of sorts may have taken place.

Records found at Wadi Hammamat, a large mining region in ancient times, do attest to his reign and make reference to expeditions to quarry stone for monuments. The records name a vizier,

Rock tombs of Beni Hasan, an Ancient Egyptian burial site primarily used during the Middle Kingdom



Amenemhat, as its commander. Whether or not this is the same Amenemhat that would eventually assume the throne, we cannot know for sure. However, it certainly seems likely.

So began the next dynasty with Amenemhat I at its head. He began by moving the capital back to Memphis (the capital during the Old Kingdom), as well as forming a standing army (an asset his successors would maintain for the rest of the dynasty).

The new king began fortifying the country's borders, especially those between Egypt and Asia, where he erected the Walls of the Ruler in the East Delta. In fact, Amenemhat I rebuilt or built new fortifications all around Egypt, transforming military strategy from expansion to simple defence.

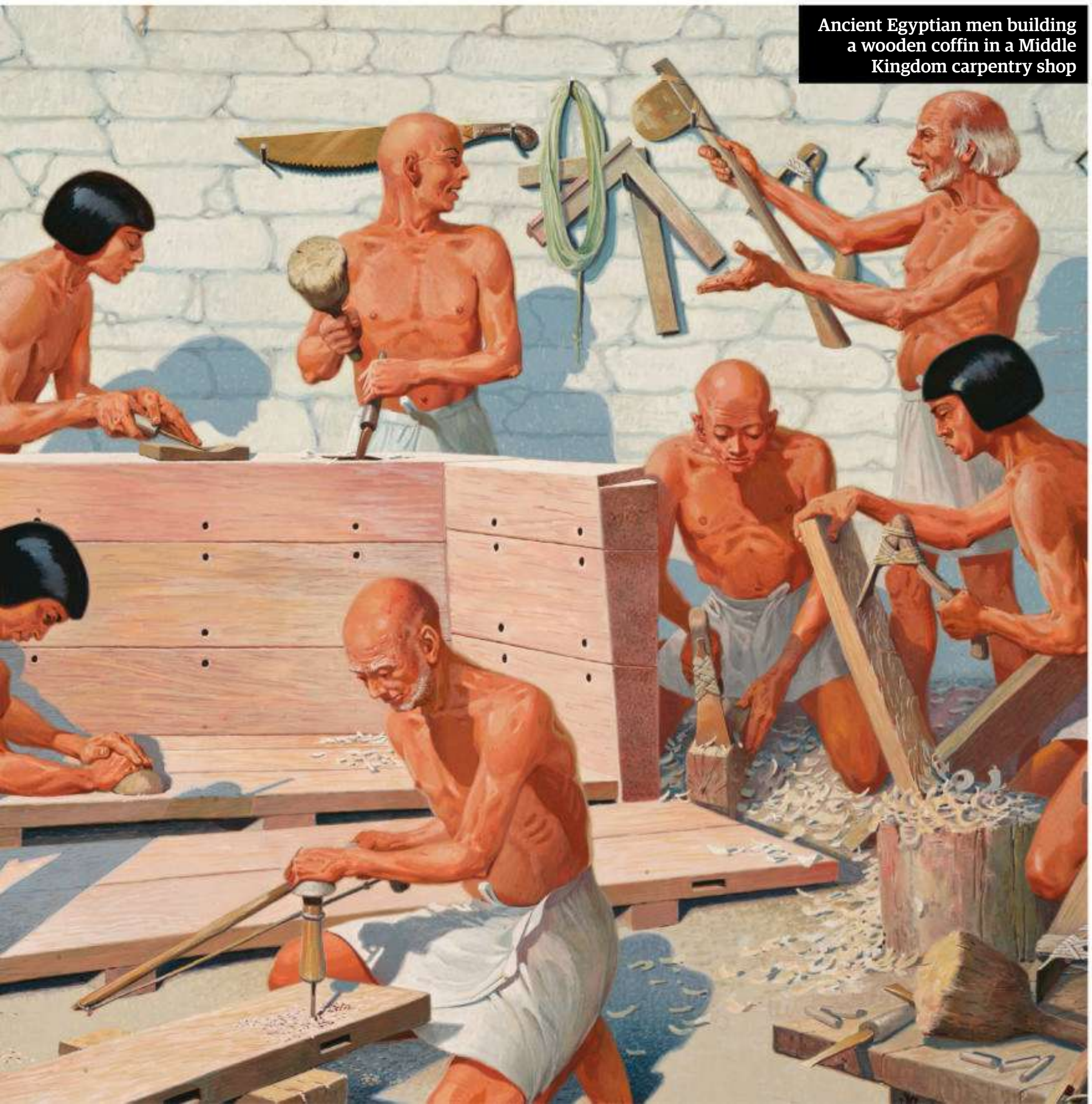
Amenemhat I would eventually begin a co-regency with his son, Senusret, before the elder king was assassinated – supposedly by his own guards. His successor, now Senusret I, began a more expansive series of military campaigns before eventually entering a co-regency with his own son, Amenemhat II. His son enjoyed a relatively peaceful reign of his kingdom and eventually chose a traditional joint rule with his successor, Senusret II. The new pharaoh focused mainly on the maintenance of the realm, building a pyramid at el-Lahun as well as attempting to convert the Faiyum oasis into workable farmland.

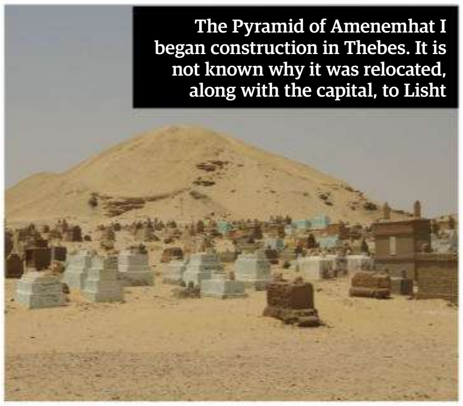
Under the sole rule of his successor Senusret III, the Middle Kingdom enjoyed the peak of its power and influence. The new warrior king was unlike anything the era had seen before – he represented a mind-set from a long forgotten era, an aggressive hunger to expand the kingdom and conquer new lands. He moved a huge army north of the kingdom and attacked the Nubians relentlessly, punishing them into surrender before claiming considerable Nubian territories.

His successor, Amenemhat III, is famed for his radical approach to construction. He took advantage of the country's limestone and sandstone quarries like never before, beginning a huge programme of building that spread across the entire kingdom.

His son, Amenemhat IV, has a poorly recorded rule but his successor, Sobekneferu, became the first recorded female Egyptian ruler in the country's history (although her reign lasted only four years).

> During the Middle Kingdom the elevated flood levels of the Nile boosted agriculture and buoyed the economy


Ancient Egyptian men building a wooden coffin in a Middle Kingdom carpentry shop

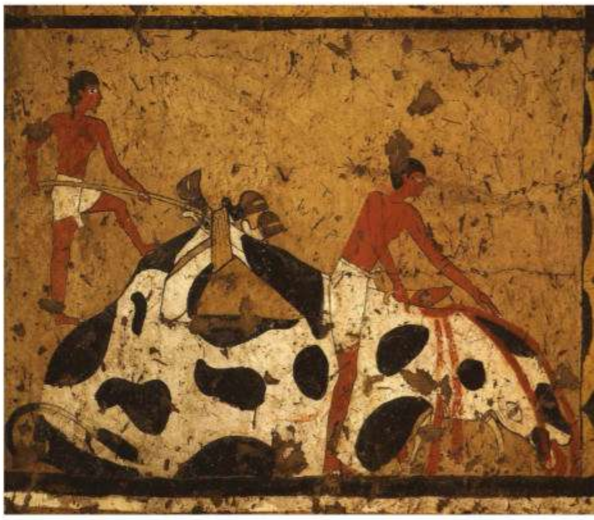

The Pyramid of Amenemhat I began construction in Thebes. It is not known why it was relocated, along with the capital, to Lisht

THE FEUDAL GOVERNMENTS OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

In the Old Kingdom before it and the New Kingdom that followed, the pharaoh's rule was absolute. Priests, nobles and even the queen herself could act, with consent, on the king's behalf, but the for the most part, the pharaoh answered to no one but the gods. However, that definitive rule came under threat when the Old Kingdom crumbled and splintered into two separate realms. With two dynasties now vying for power, the normal authoritative structure of the kingdom was in ruins.

Prior to the rise of the pharaohs, the entire country was divided into small administrative colonies known as *nomes*. Each nome had an appointed leader (*nomarch*), and it was these independent city states that the first pharaoh had to unite in order to establish Egypt as a single nation.

Even after unification, the nomarchs – 20 of whom were based in Lower Egypt and 22 in Upper Egypt – remained. However, they existed more as regional officials who would report directly to the royal court. As the country entered the First Intermediate Period, these nomes began to assume autonomy once again. By the time of reunification, new sole pharaoh Amenemhat I found these states unwilling to bend the knee entirely. The position of nomarch was considered hereditary (rather than being subject to the king's discretion), an issue made all the worse by marriages that created powerful alliances between multiple nomes. In order to maintain peace in the kingdom, Amenemhat was forced to agree to an alliance of sorts, creating a bizarre feudal system that lasted until the reign of Senusret III.



The New Kingdom

The last great age of Ancient Egypt was its grandest yet – an era of economic enterprise, domestic beautification and military expansion

Lasting from the 16th to 11th century BCE, the New Kingdom saw Ancient Egypt transformed. Its kings and queens both looked ahead at the promising future of the realm and back in the hope of emulating the monarchs of the past. The empire was expanded by the sword of warrior kings, while the realm itself was rebuilt from the ground up by a new economic prosperity. This was Ancient Egypt at its peak, as reflected in the resultant boom in arts and culture.

The New Kingdom was preceded by another fracture known as the Second Intermediate Period. Towards the start of the 16th century BCE, a small warrior tribe known as the Hyksos had begun settling in the fertile land of the Delta (a group of rivers and tributaries that led into the Mediterranean Sea). By the time the pharaoh in Thebes realised what was happening, it was too late. The Hyksos were fearsome warriors who used advanced weaponry – mainly cavalry, chariots and powerful compound bows – and who were comfortably settled. The 15th Dynasty was established and lasted for more than 150 years, but the Hyksos presence divided Egypt in two, with the invaders controlling Lower Egypt while the Thebans ruled Upper Egypt. Kings made many efforts to defeat the Hyksos, but the tribesman were seasoned warriors and weren't so easily deterred.

Mortuary beliefs developed during this era, leading to an influx of talismans and amulets for protection in the afterlife

It wasn't until the time of Ahmose I, the first pharaoh of the 17th Dynasty, that everything changed. Having watched his family fail to banish the Hyksos, Ahmose I raised a huge

A statue of Akhenaten from his Aten Temple at Karnak

army and met the Hyksos with unrelenting force. Over many years he pummelled the borders, slowly driving the Hyksos back. Eventually, the Theban pharaoh drove the occupying forces from his homeland and set about restoring Egypt to its former glory.

With Egypt unified, the 17th Dynasty's founder began an expansive series of military campaigns that added new territories to the realm while regaining lands lost in the Second Intermediate Period. These conquests brought new wealth into the economy – it re-energised the construction of temples and monuments and enabled Ahmose I to rebuild the decorated nation of old.

Ahmose I's desire to restore Egypt to its former greatness would be reflected in the actions of the kings and queens who followed. Amenhotep III rebuilt monuments, tombs, and statues on a scale never seen before, solidifying the bubbling new culture of arts and expression.

Queen Hatshepsut was the first woman to take the title of pharaoh, and she helped nurture the country's economy, including expeditions to Punt and other trading posts. Thutmose III created one of the most impressive armies ever assembled by a pharaoh and used it to expand Egypt's borders with conquest after conquest. The 18th Dynasty was a time of achievement on multiple fronts, but like any age of success, there was also a catch.

That blip came in the form of Amenhotep IV, also known as Akhenaten. A religious zealot who despised the power of the Church of Amun (the patron god of the Theban kings), Akhenaten did not believe in the polytheistic practices that had defined Egyptian theology since the country's earliest times. He outlawed the worship of any god other than his chosen deity, Aten, and forced the country into massive religious upheaval.

The Amarna Period, as it would come to be known, only lasted 16 years, but the damage was already done. The upheaval was so universally despised that Akhenaten was branded the 'Heretic Pharaoh', even by his own son and future pharaoh Tutankhamun. His legacy was summarily expunged from many future histories and a course was set to bring Egypt back to its former glory.

The dynasty that followed pushed Egypt's prosperity to new heights. The most notable pharaoh of the period, Ramesses II, took the great armies formed by Thutmose III and weaved a military campaign that moulded Egypt into its most powerful form. He sired a considerable number of children (most of whom he outlived) and built a huge tomb and necropolis in the Valley of the Kings.

Like the 19th Dynasty, the 20th was also defined by the legacy of one man: Ramesses III. However, while Ramesses II would strengthen his nation, his descendent would ultimately weaken it by draining the treasury with unsuccessful military campaigns and defensive operations. It was his mismanagement of the crown that eventually set about the slow decline of the New Kingdom and the native pharaonic line as a whole.

When the New Kingdom era drew to a close with the death of Ramesses XI, Egypt would never again prosper under native Egyptian rule

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

Following the end of the New Kingdom and its final golden age, what was next for this ancient civilisation?

While the period we know as Ancient Egypt officially ended with the death of Cleopatra VII and its addition to the Roman Empire in 30 BCE, its true demise could be attributed to the death of Ramesses XI. The span of time that followed, the Third Intermediate Period, saw the power of the pharaohs start to deteriorate as political in-fighting took hold. The period lasted about 350 years and was split into three stages: the first saw the rule of the country divided between the 21st Dynasty (which controlled Lower Egypt) and the High Priests of Amun at Thebes (which ruled most of Middle and Upper Egypt). The two states existed in relatively peaceful harmony.

The second period saw the country reunited thanks to the rise of the 22nd Dynasty and new king Shoshenq I – the Libyan monarchy came to power in about 945 BCE, expanding out from the East Delta to control the entire nation. Once the country's bitter enemy, the Libyans now ruled Egypt as native Egyptians. The country began to destabilise once again under the rule of the 22nd Dynasty in 850 BCE, and by 818 BCE, a rival 23rd Dynasty had risen, which then caused the nation to fragment into warring states.

The country would eventually fall to a Nubian invasion, lasting 25 years. This marked a trend for the coming centuries as Egypt's grand native history was buried by an Assyrian, Persian and eventual Greek invasion during the subsequent Late Period. In short, the nation had fragmented so far from the stable centralised structure of the three kingdom eras that it ultimately benefited from the stability outside rule brought with it.

Kingdom of Kush

Egypt's southern neighbours forged an empire that lasted for more than a thousand years, establishing the Twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt as they pushed northwards

Written by Will Lawrence

When Rome was nothing more than a village on the River Tiber and the Greek city-states ruled tiny tracts of land, the mighty Kingdom of Kush held sway over an empire that stretched from central Sudan to the Palestinian borderlands. Its rulers flourished for a millennium, outlasted the golden ages of Athens, Sparta and Macedonia, and witnessed both the growth and much of the decline of the Roman Empire.

And yet here is a kingdom that to history has been perennially overshadowed by the ancient Egyptians, their famous neighbours to the north, even though, for a time, Egypt too fell under Kushite control. When the Kushites were finally expelled from Egypt at the hands of the Assyrians, their homeland dwindled to a place of peripheral influence and, says one leading historian, "increasingly found itself at the end of a cul-de-sac in the Nile valley, the exit to which was always blocked by a strong power to the north." Yet still it endured, and its inhabitants prospered. Today, the area that made up the Kingdom of Kush is more commonly known as Nubia, which derives its name from the people who moved into the vacuum that formed when the Kushite state finally collapsed in the 4th century CE.

The Kingdom of Kush finds its origins in a powerful state that formed in the 3rd millennium BCE, taking advantage of its position on the Middle Nile where it stood as a gateway for trade, ferrying the rich materials from the south, like gold and jewels, to the consumer markets in the north. The state through which this trade route flowed held its capital at Kerma, just upstream of what is now cited as the Third Nile Cataract. Kerma enjoyed a prosperous reign until, during the period around 1750-1650 BCE, a people called the Hyksos rose to power in the Nile Delta.

Initially, the people of Kerma forged an alliance with the Hyksos and pushed further north, taking the Egyptian fortresses of the Second Cataract. Eventually, however, the pharaohs rallied, and Amosis (1570-46 BCE) reunited Egypt and defeated the Hyksos in battle. The New Kingdom of Egypt then exacted vengeance for the Kerma land-grab, and the kingdom was crushed; the pharaohs Thutmose I and Thutmose III enforced an Egyptian military presence in the area. It was to commemorate Thutmose I's campaigns that his son oversaw the famous inscription that speaks of his return from overthrowing the "wretched Kush".

Under Egyptian control, a syncretistic culture arose in Kush, influenced by trends in Egypt to the north and by the culture of the African peoples to the south. Kush's position on the trade routes from Egypt to the Red Sea, and from the Nile to the south and west, continued to bring considerable wealth to the region.

Egypt could not maintain control indefinitely, however, and by the 9th century BCE there was little remaining evidence of the pharaohs' colonisation; the major cult centre at Napata had certainly fallen into ruin, and it is from this time that archaeologists begin to record data from a separate Kushite state. Gifts from the pharaoh to the Temple of Karnak in 827 BCE included gold from the region around Napata, which then became the seat of early Kushite kings, and this suggests that the two kingdoms were enjoying cordial diplomatic and trading relations despite the former, more precarious association.

The early Kushite rulers are difficult to identify, and prior to Kashta, who led the Kushite expansion

> **“Piye led the Kushite push into Egypt, which established the Twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt”**

into Egypt during the 8th century BCE, we know only of Alara and Ary, and it seems as though they may be the same person. Kashta ruled Kush from Napata, which is around 300 miles north of Khartoum, the modern capital of Sudan, and he enjoyed considerable influence in Egypt, as evidenced by the installation of his daughter, Amenirdis I, as the presumptive God’s Wife of Amun in Thebes. Indeed, Kashta went on to extend Kushite control into Thebes and also Elephantine. His successor, Piye, then led the great Kushite push into Egypt, which established the Twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt. This period of Kushite pre-eminence is often referred to as the Napatan Empire, named after the state capital, and the Kushite kings ruled Egypt (in its entirety or in part) from 744 until 656 BCE.

Given its proximity to and long historical connection with its northern neighbour, it is not surprising that Kushite culture at this stage greatly resembled that of the Egyptians. And, certainly, the Kushite kings appear to have entered Egypt “not as conquering barbarians,” one notable historian and archaeologist writes, “but as champions of the age-old traditions of the pharaohs.” The Kushite state’s great god, at least during the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, was Amun, the great god of Egypt who had ruled almost unopposed since the 2nd millennium BCE.

Though most rulers were male, there is a clear indication that queens too sat on the Kushite throne, and there is no reason to believe they were not rulers in their own right; the Bible in Acts 8:27 speaks of “Candace, queen of the Ethiopians”, while there are further sources that record the Kandake, the female ruler of Kush. Clearly, some confuse the generic name with the name of an actual ruler.

With regard to the succession, it seems that the most suitable candidate was chosen from a select band, who may or may not have been related to their predecessor, while the Ancient Greek historian Diodorus reports that the candidates were chosen by the priesthood from the most valorous Kushites before their god made the final choice. It appears that there were conflicts between the rulers and the priesthood in Kush, and Diodorus records that the priests of Meroë (the later seat of the rulers) were able to dictate the date of the ruler’s death. Throughout Kushite history, the political system remained monarchic.

The army was of keen importance – the Egyptians appear to have regarded the denizens of the Kushite state as good bowmen and horse warriors – though not much is known about its composition and whether it was a professional body or a citizen militia called upon in times of need. There is evidence that some leaders did not fight with the army, while others such as Taharqo (690-664 BCE) and Akinidad (dates unknown, though he fought the Romans) appear as battle-

> Meroë, the capital of the Kingdom of Kush, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2011

KINGS OF KUSH

Many Kushite rulers are shadowy figures, though we know something of a few great kings

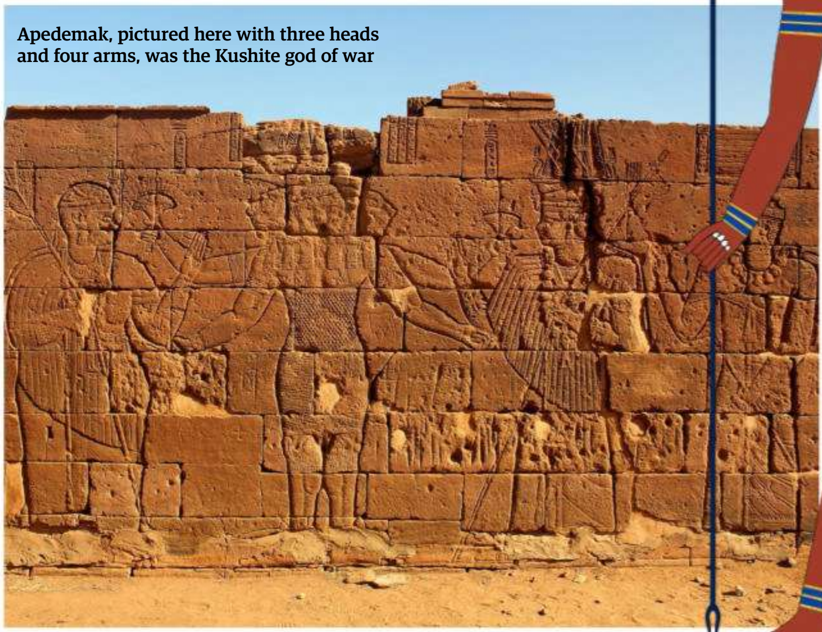
Kashta
Mid 8th century BCE
The second king of the Napatan Empire of the Kushites, Kashta proved pivotal in the expansion into Egypt, and he laid the foundations for what would become the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. His only known wife was Pebatjma, and he was buried in the royal pyramid at el-Kurru.

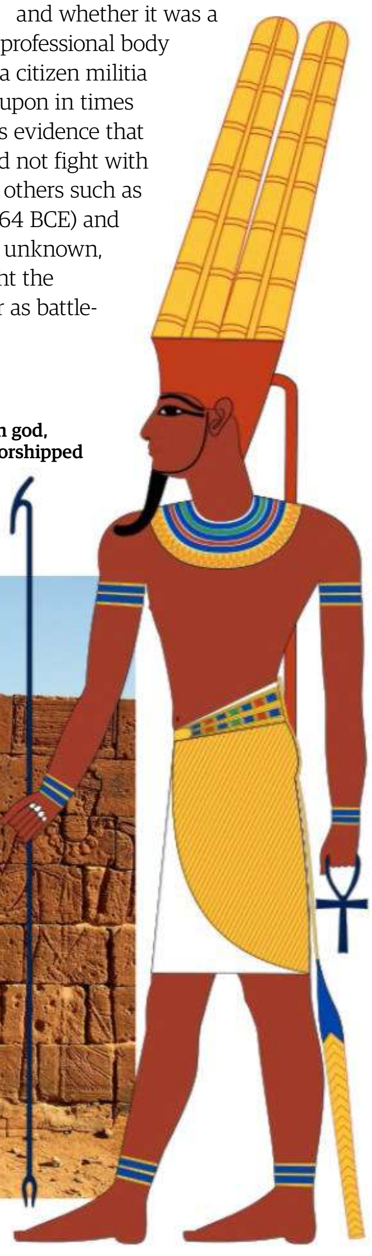
Piye
c.752-c.721 BCE
Kashta’s successor completed the invasion of Egypt, and became the first pharaoh of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, which ruled Egypt until the Assyrian invasion. The length of his rule cannot be precisely dated, but it likely did not exceed 31 years.

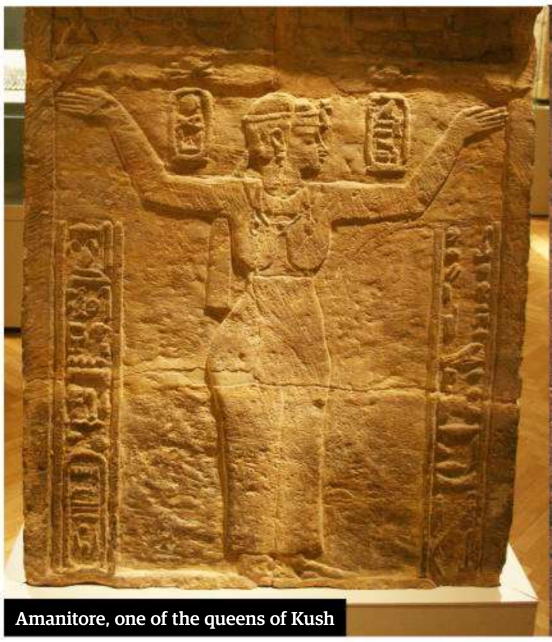
Taharqo
690-664 BCE
The son of Piye, Taharqo oversaw a prosperous period in the Kushite history, and he proved a capable warlord, fighting as best he could the invasion of Egypt by the iron-wielding Assyrians. Despite inferior weapons, his troops recorded at least one famous victory.

Tanwetamani
664-653 BCE
The nephew of his predecessor, Tanwetamani sought to wrestle control of Egypt back from the Assyrians, and reoccupied all of Egypt including Memphis. The Assyrian response was swift and lethal, their re-conquest effectively ending Kushite influence over Egypt.

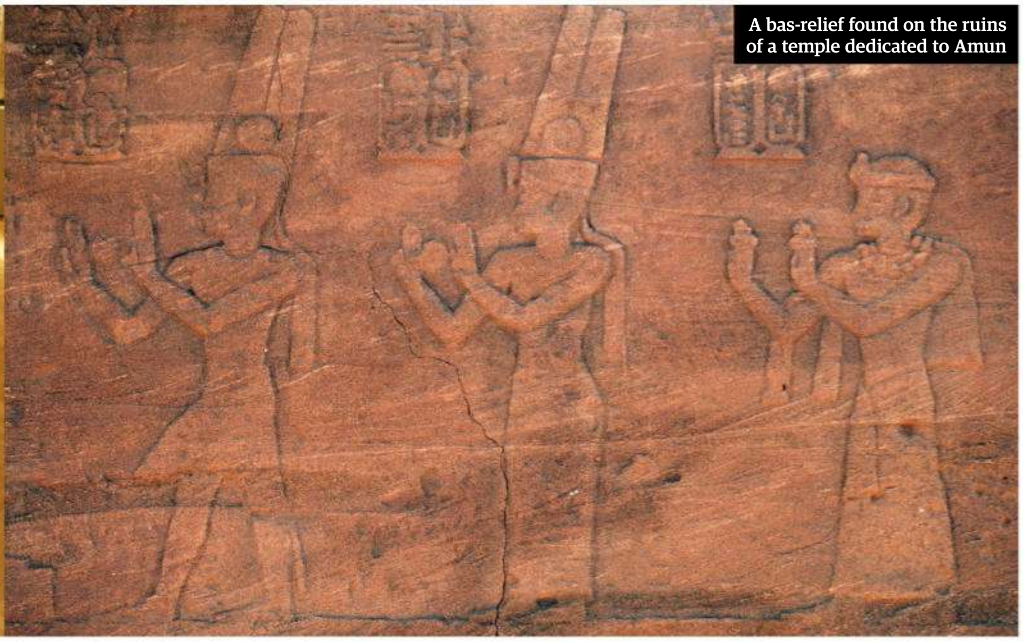
Aspelta
c.600-580 BCE
Kushite history becomes shadier after the fall of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, but Aspelta left monuments carved with historical details, and it’s been suggested that Assyrian incursions from the north encouraged Aspelta to move the Kushite capital from Napata to Meroë.


Apedemak, pictured here with three heads and four arms, was the Kushite god of war


While an Egyptian god, Amun was also worshipped by the Kushites



Amanitore, one of the queens of Kush



A bas-relief found on the ruins of a temple dedicated to Amun

ready warlords.

Herodotus records the presence of Kushite soldiers in the army of Xerxes that invaded Greece in the early 5th century, claiming they fought with javelins and knotted clubs, and that before battle they smeared their bodies with chalk and red ochre. Historians think the Kushite army may have used war elephants, like the Carthaginians, and the elephant does appear in Kushite art. The efficacy of the Kushite army is difficult to assess, though while the clashes between Kushites and Assyrians saw their expulsion from Egypt and the toppling of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, the warriors of Kush did record at least one notable victory, defeating the iron-wielding Assyrians in 674 BCE. Like many armies that faced Rome, the Kushites seem to have recorded little success, and the historian and geographer Strabo noted that they fled, badly beaten at the Battle of Pselchis in 23 BCE.

The artistic evidence that survives suggests that the people of Kush were dark-skinned, and it seems that by the later Kushite period, size was a desirable attribute for mortal women at least, and while the goddesses remained slim in their depictions, the earthly women are shown with considerable girth. Life expectancy was typical of the region during the period, and while Taharqo reigned for more than 25 years, dying at the age of 46 or 47, typical mortality would not have broached much more than 30 years of age.

Once forced from Egypt by the Assyrian invasion, the Kushites ruled the Middle Nile for more than 800 years and, protected as it was by the barren hills of Aswan, it retained its unique Egyptian-Nubian culture, while that of Egypt fell prey to Persian, Greek and Roman influence. The Kushites developed and retained their own language, which has confused linguists ever since its discovery, and they preserved their own gods – like Apedemak, Sebiumeker and Arensnuphis – as well as adopting the great Egyptian deities. Their funerary rites involved burying their rulers in pyramids, though their construction was somewhat different to that of the Egyptians.

Following their expulsion from Egypt, the Kushite capital was moved from Napata southward to Meroë near Shandī. The subsequent history of Kush, however, is one of gradual decline, ending with the kingdom's final fall coming in 350 CE when the king of Aksum moved down from the Ethiopian highlands and destroyed Meroë before plundering the towns along the Nile. The once mighty Kingdom of Kush was no more.

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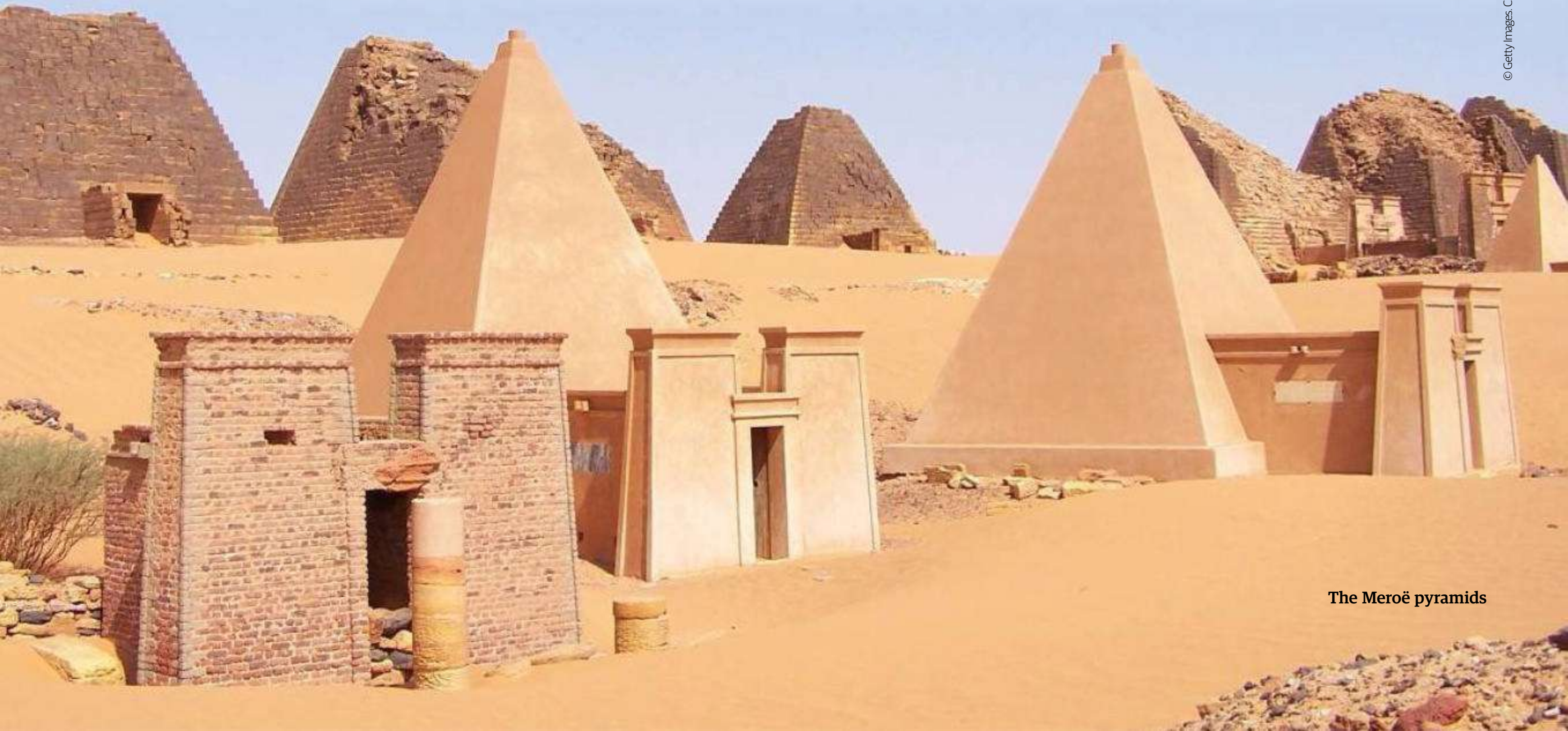
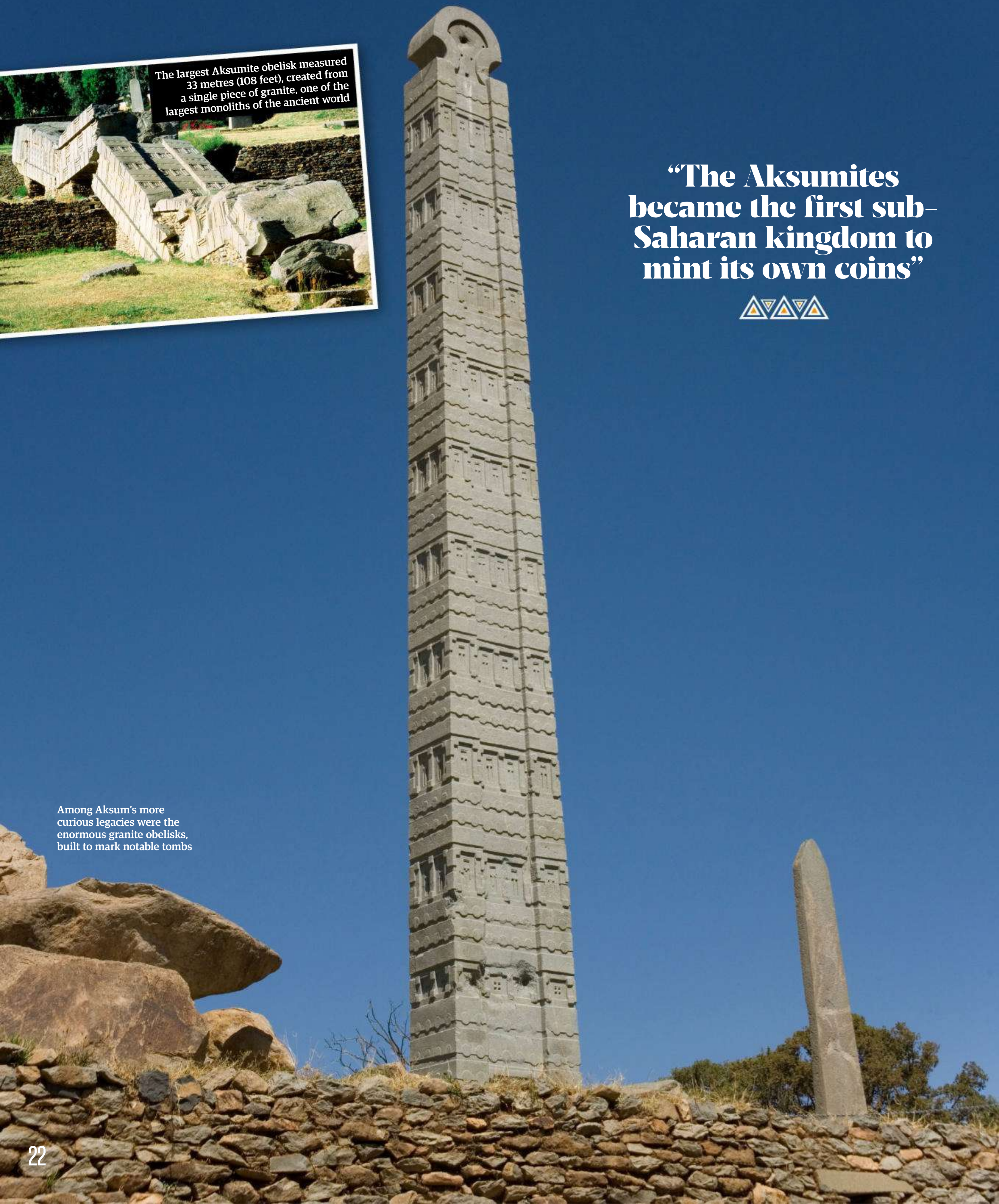


The Meroë pyramids

The largest Aksumite obelisk measured 33 metres (108 feet), created from a single piece of granite, one of the largest monoliths of the ancient world

“The Aksumites became the first sub-Saharan kingdom to mint its own coins”



Among Aksum's more curious legacies were the enormous granite obelisks, built to mark notable tombs

The Kingdom of Aksum

Uniquely situated between the Western and Asiatic worlds, the sub-Saharan kingdom of Aksum grew into the most powerful state between the Roman Empire and Persia

Written by Hareth Al Bustani

In the 1st millennium BCE, sub-Saharan Africa was in a state of great migration. The east was transformed as Arabs crossed over the Red Sea, settling down with Kushite farmers, bringing with them the Semitic script. They established trading settlements along the Horn of Africa, buying ivory and shipping it across to Persia and further east via the Indian Ocean – bringing back textiles, spices and silk.

The city of Aksum was founded in the 1st century CE in the northern highlands of modern Ethiopia. With two annual rainy seasons, this fertile land soon drew scores of settlers from the south to rear cattle and farm. Cereal grew on the hillsides for up to nine months of the year, and the uniquely nutritious Ethiopian grain, teff, flourished even in the absence of rain. Its forests were rich in timber, used to produce charcoal, and the Aksumites terraced hilltops, dug canals, and built dams and cisterns. Shortly after its foundation, a visiting Greek described the city as a "metropolis" – the first recorded use of the word, which means a large, highly developed and significant city.

Aksum was described by a contemporary Persian writer as one of the four greatest powers in the world at the time

According to local oral tradition, the indigenous inhabitants of the region were the Nilo-Saharan-speaking Kunama, who lived in Aksum alongside Semites before being expelled west. The name 'Aksum' probably derives from the Kunama words 'aya' and 'gusma', meaning 'hill' and 'climb'. As the city grew, it developed a civilisation of its own, with an outward-looking perspective.

Though the port of Adulis on the Red Sea coast of modern Eritrea was a 12-day journey away, the Aksumites grew wealthy trading with the Roman Empire, South Arabia, India, Sri Lanka and even China. Naturally the polity began to dominate its neighbours, expanding its political sphere as far as the Red Sea, where it acted as gatekeeper for luxury goods coming in and out of Africa. By the middle of the 2nd century, Aksum was described by a Greek geographer as the seat of a king's palace.

Having taken Egypt around the same time as Aksum was born, the Roman Empire became a natural trading partner. The Red Sea was the only source capable of meeting Rome's demand for incense, spice, ivory, cinnamon, pepper, cotton cloth, iron and steel. Pliny the Younger also mentioned the trade of slaves, hippopotamus hides and apes. During the 3rd century, as Roman power waned, the East African and Indian Ocean trade routes were controlled by the Arabs and Persians – with the Aksumites dominating their side of the Red Sea coast down to Cape Guardafui.

To commemorate its rising status, Aksum became the first sub-Saharan kingdom to mint its own coins, in gold, silver and bronze. Early coinage was adorned with crescents and discs, perhaps inspired by the civilisation's South Arabian roots. Gold coins were minted to Roman weight standards, and adorned with Greek – specifically for international trading purposes. Silver and copper coins, on the other hand, were decorated with the Semitic Ge'ez script. At this time, a Persian religious leader referred to Aksum as one of the world's four great empires.

The Aksumites projected this prestige through monumental obelisks, built to mark the royal necropolis. Their carved designs resembled multi-storey buildings, a fitting tribute to the royals, who lived their lives in three-storey stone palaces. Almost 120 of these adorn the royal graveyard – looming over stone tombs – complete with false doors and horseshoe brick arches. The largest of the obelisks towered some 33 metres high, carved from a single 550-ton block of granite. One of the ancient world's largest monolithic structures, it was carried four kilometres to its site, perhaps with the help of elephants.

At its peak, the city spanned 75 hectares, and was a thriving centre complete with industrial zones, palaces and two-story residential buildings. Palaces boasted stone walls lined with lime or mud, and reinforced with dressed beams. Central pavilions featured paintings and columns, surrounded by courtyards and smaller buildings. Meanwhile, commoners lived in mud houses with thatched roofs.

With no fortified walls, a ceremonial entrance marked the eastern gate, leading to a central temple, with a residential area to the west and a royal cemetery to the north and east. The whole city was surrounded by minor cemeteries and

THE CATHEDRAL OF OUR LADY MARY OF ZION

With the adoption of Christianity, church construction got underway – but one of the new buildings quickly became steeped in myth and legend

Among the churches built after King Ezana's adoption of the Christian faith was Aksum's own Cathedral of Our Lady Mary of Zion, a rectangular basilica built upon a stepped podium. Facing the church is a set of granite thrones, symbolising either 12 Aksumite judges, or the Nine Saints and some Christian kings. The Patriarch of Alexandria elected an Egyptian Copt as the Archbishop of the Ethiopian Church, a tradition that has continued to this day. Rebuilt as a crenellated Gondarine-style building in the 17th century, it hosts a sacred room, with doors depicting angels with swords, said to hold the Ark of the Covenant – the fabled chest believed to contain the original tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments.

Ethiopian legend claims the Ark was brought there by Menelik – the lovechild of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, who formed the country's Solomonic dynasty. Today it is watched over by a guardian monk – appointed for life. During the annual festival of Timkat, celebrating Christ's baptism, Ethiopian priests parade replicas of the Ark. Aksum remains a pilgrimage site, with worshippers travelling to a body of water known as Sheba's Bath, where the Queen was said to bathe.

> "The Aksumites mastered the arts of basic smelting and forging"

suburbs. Roughly 20,000 people called it home, with the king at the top of a hierarchical society, followed by nobles, priests and then the common craftsmen and farmers.

Traditional Aksumite pottery was handmade and poorly fired, but slipped and finely burnished. Wheel-thrown vessels were imported from the Mediterranean, Arabian Gulf and Nile Valley rather than produced at home. Locals did their best to replicate foreign goods, such as glassware, using parts of broken imports. They also crafted standardised flaked stone tools, used to process raw materials from ivory to hides. The Aksumites mastered the arts of basic smelting and forging, crafting an array of specialist metal tools used to produce ivory artefacts, often adorned with intertwined vines and animals with distinctive features.

Pieces such as the Venus of Aksum, found in a 3rd-century elite grave, hint at an upper-class appreciation of Graeco-Roman aesthetics. Ivory was immensely popular across the Roman Empire, Arabia, India and China, and with the North African elephant on the brink of extinction, Aksum was well-positioned to capitalise on its own abundant elephant population – with herds of reportedly up to 5,000. However, this pushed it into an economic war with its northwestern neighbour, the kingdom of Kush.

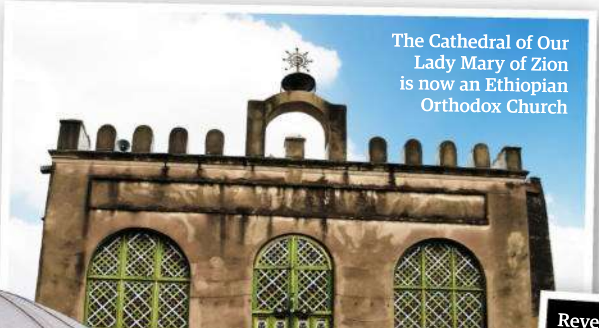
Aksum reached its peak in the 4th century under the reign of King Ezana who defeated the desert tribe of Beja, deporting them to distant lands. He went on to conquer Yemen before taking down the Kushite capital of Meroë where, in his own words: "I carried war against them when they had rebelled… I burnt their towns of stone and their towns of straw. At the same time my men plundered their grain, their bronze, their iron and their copper, destroyed the idols in their homes, their stocks of corn and of cotton; and they threw themselves into the river."

His kingdom became an empire, with a dozen cities stretching from the Nile valley to the Yemeni highlands. Long inscriptions written in Greek and Semitic celebrated his conquests at great length, as well as his bold decision to depart from Aksum's traditional religion. Early Aksumites practised an indigenous, monotheistic faith, worshipping the god Mahrem, from whom their kings were descended. Animism and ancestor-worship also played a role in spirituality, with sacrifices such as a dozen oxen offered to their spirits alongside Mahrem and Ares, his equivalent, the Greek god of war.

However, in around 330 Ezana was baptised by the Syrian monk Frumentius of Tyre. Aksum became one of the earliest Christian states, converting just five years after Constantine made it Rome's official religion at the Council of Nicaea. Christianity quickly took root among royals and traders before funnelling down to the commoners. The state later sent missionaries to the neighbouring Kingdom of Alwa.

The conversion led to a transformation of Aksumite coinage, pottery, burial traditions and

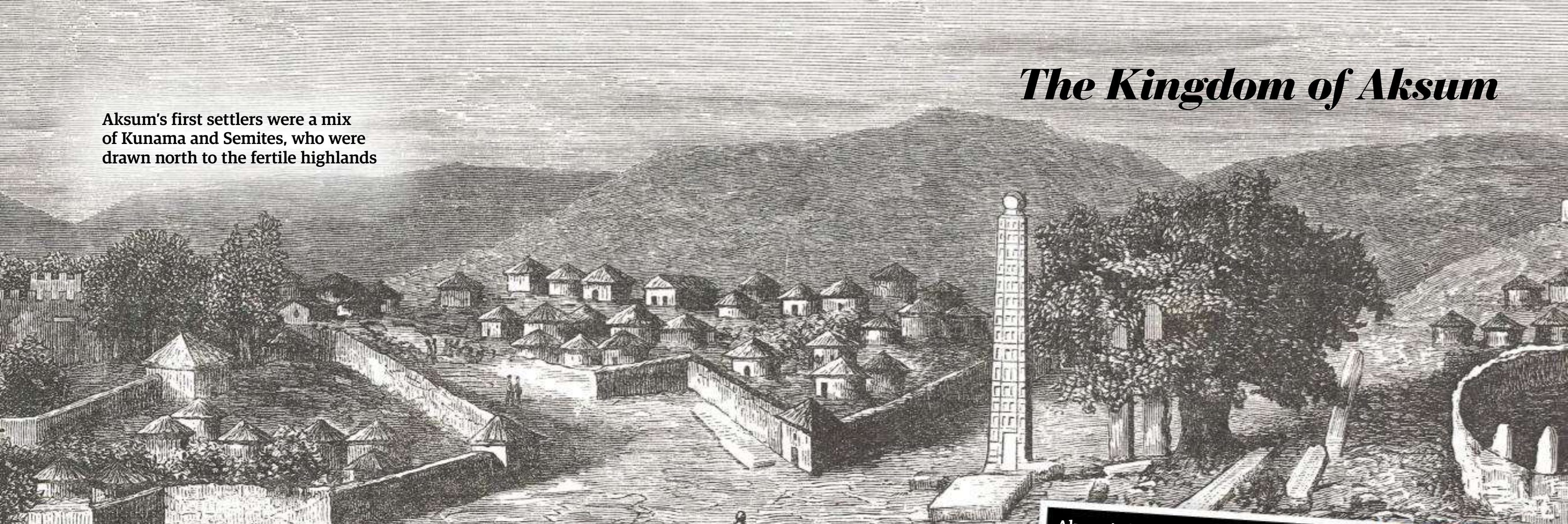
> Orthodox Christianity was fully embraced by Aksum in the 4th century CE by King Ezana



The Cathedral of Our Lady Mary of Zion is now an Ethiopian Orthodox Church

First constructed in the 4th century CE, the church has been rebuilt several times since then

Revellers celebrate the annual Timkat festival, commemorating Christ's baptism



Aksum's first settlers were a mix of Kunama and Semites, who were drawn north to the fertile highlands

Aksum's farmers made the most of their fertile land, utilising terraced farming to grow wheat and the endemic grain, teff

architecture. Coins were now adorned with the Christian cross, along with the king's likeness, an image of the teff and the inscription: "May the country be satisfied."

Others said "Joy and peace to the people" and "He conquers through Christ". Aksumite minters began replacing gold coins with copper ones, innovating gilding methods to decorate crowns and other symbols with gold leaf.

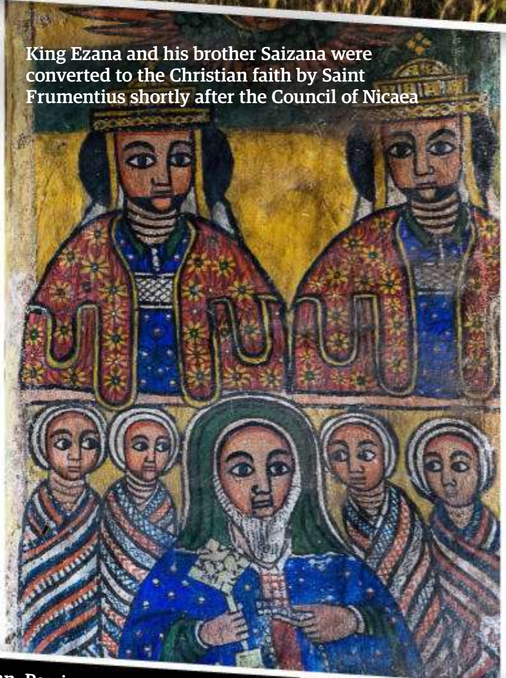
In the 5th century, despite the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the kingdom enjoyed a rapid development boom – attributed by later Ethiopians to the 'Nine Saints', who founded the churches and monasteries outside the kingdom's capital. Emboldened, the 6th-century king Kaleb sent an army to Yemen to liberate Christians from persecution. While this resulted in new territories and a closer bond with the Byzantine emperor Justin I, it had proved a costly enterprise, marking the start of the kingdom's steady decline. Things were only made worse by the trade disruptions caused by the Persian invasions of Yemen, Jerusalem and Alexandria.

With the arrival of Islam, the Aksumites and Muslims briefly enjoyed an amicable relationship – with an Aksumite king granting refuge to a group of Muslims during the First Hijra in around 615. However, as the religion flourished the Arabians took total control of the Red Sea and cut it off from the Mediterranean. Shortly after, the Aksumites were forced to move their capital eastwards, with Aksum itself surviving into the modern age as a religious and coronation site.

With the ensuing Arab destruction of Adulis, the Aksumites, whose entire economy was modelled on international trade, were strangled – confining them to their agricultural highlands, coinciding with a massive drop in rainfall. Before long the area was abandoned, decaying into a handful of villages and monasteries as power shifted southwards, where Aksumite aesthetics were reborn in the Medieval rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, now in modern-day Ethiopia's Amhara Region.

While Aksum began as a self-sufficient farming community, when it rapidly blossomed into a merchant kingdom its greatest source of strength eventually became its greatest weakness. As a uniquely powerful sub-Saharan civilisation dependent upon the international status quo and the movement of goods and peoples around the ancient world, perhaps its reach exceeded its grasp – like its greatest obelisk, which came tumbling down under its own weight, the foundation simply was not strong enough.

Aksum became the first sub-Saharan power to begin minting its own coins, depicting kings and, later, Christian imagery



King Ezana and his brother Saizana were converted to the Christian faith by Saint Frumentius shortly after the Council of Nicaea

Aksum's first church, the Cathedral of Our Lady Mary of Zion, is home to a 1,000-year-old goat-skin bible, written in Ge'ez

Roman, Persian, Indian and Chinese demand for precious ivory transformed Aksum from a city to a kingdom

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Medieval

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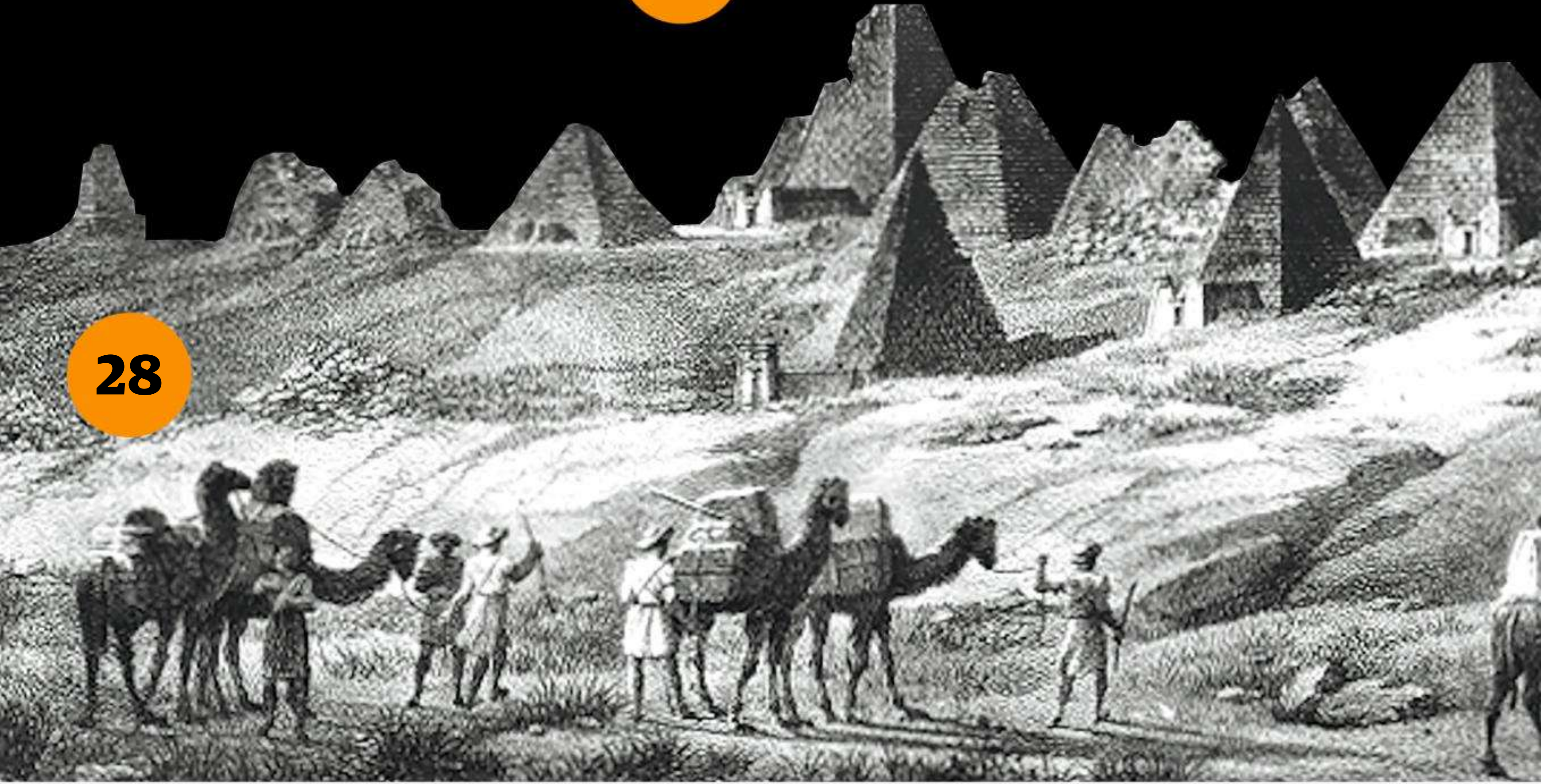
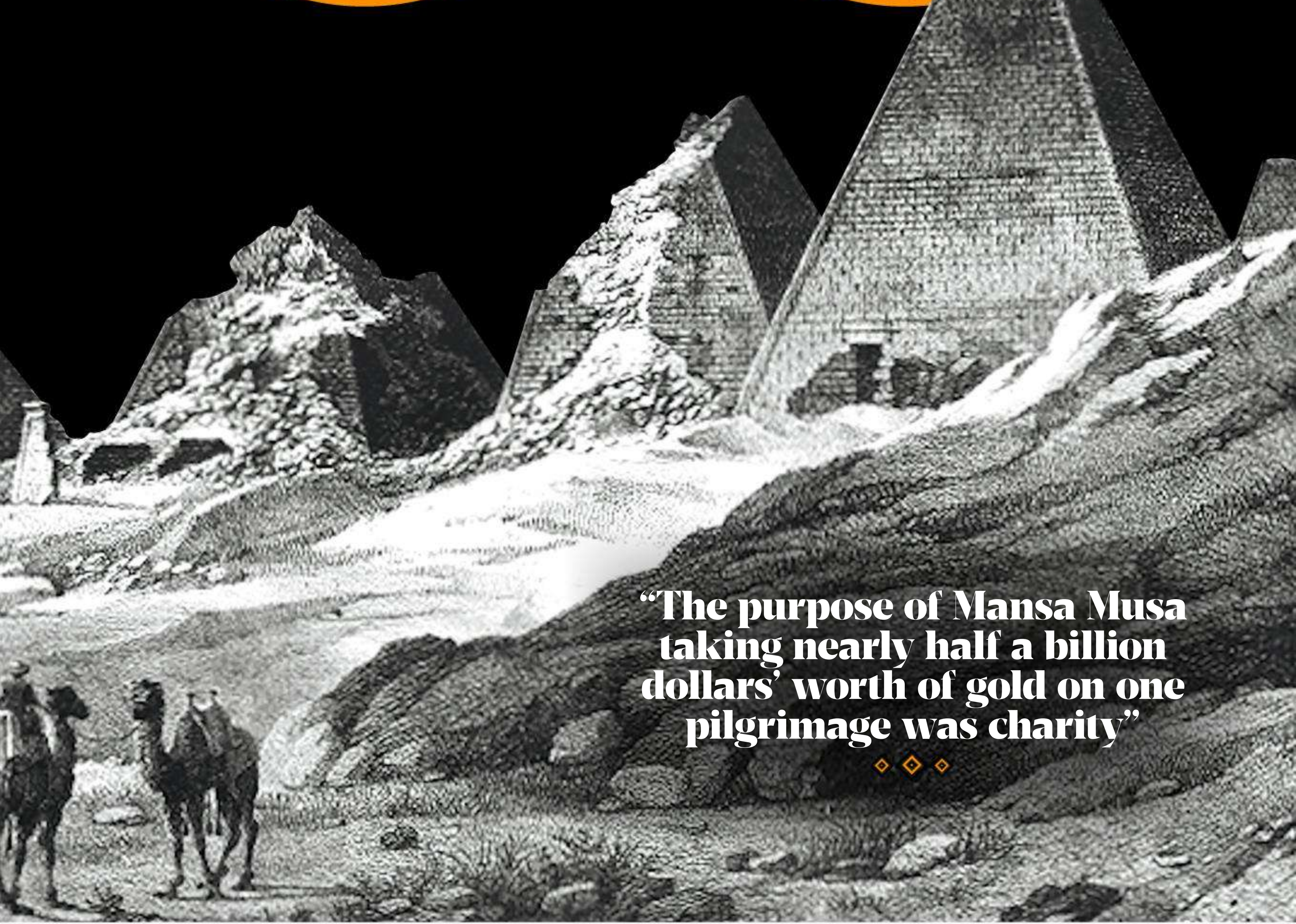
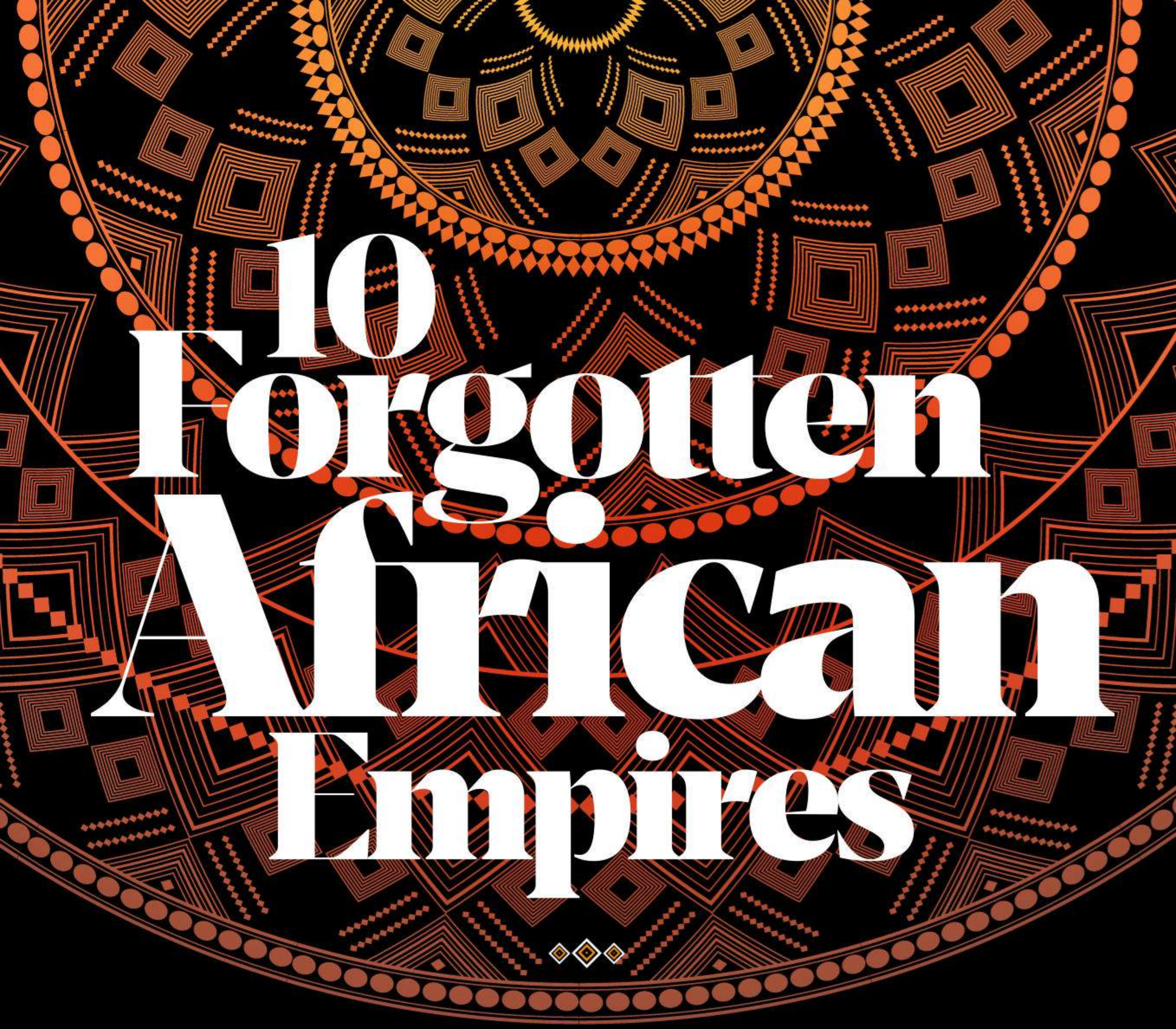




“The purpose of Mansa Musa taking nearly half a billion dollars’ worth of gold on one pilgrimage was charity”



10 Forgotten African Empires

The most powerful and expansive kingdoms that have been lost to time

Written by Jonathan Gordon

Thanks to a combination of factors, the history of the continent of Africa is a relatively unexplored and underserved area of study. This is due in part to the nature of the evidence that might be available to us to analyse. Even for the relatively well-researched history of Ancient Egypt, massive gaps and question marks exist. Thanks to conquest and colonisation, much of the history of the continent has been lost. But there is still much there to learn that has simply been ignored, relegated to footnotes, or prologues to other fields of study considered to be of greater importance.

In this feature we hope to bring some of this forgotten history to the surface. It is by no means comprehensive, but it will highlight some of the most interesting and diverse episodes in the history of Africa that might not have caught your attention before. The re-evaluation of the history of Africa is a live project that is revealing more and more fascinating stories with each passing year. This is an introduction to that exploration.

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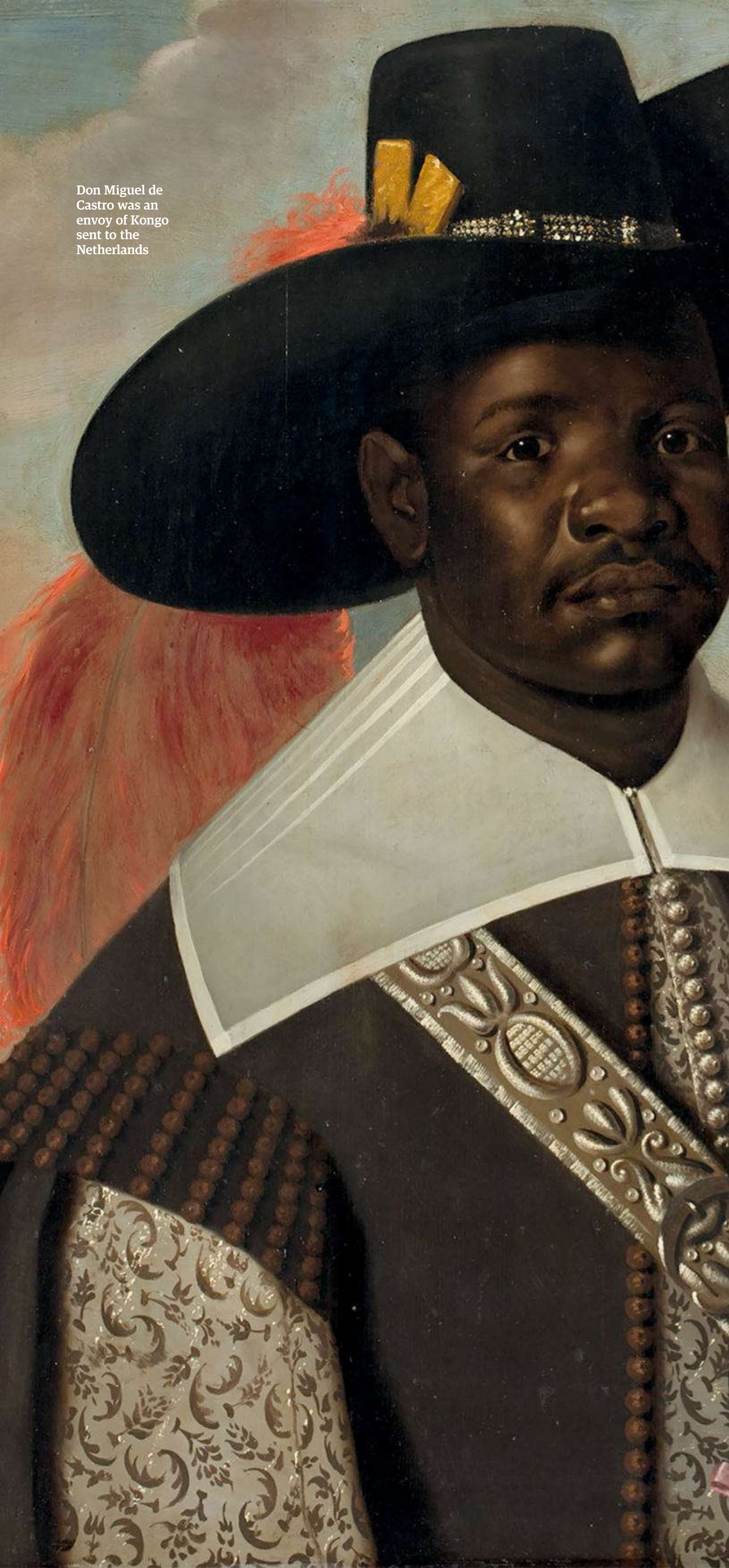


Don Miguel de Castro was an envoy of Kongo sent to the Netherlands

Image source: wiki/Statens Museum for Kunst

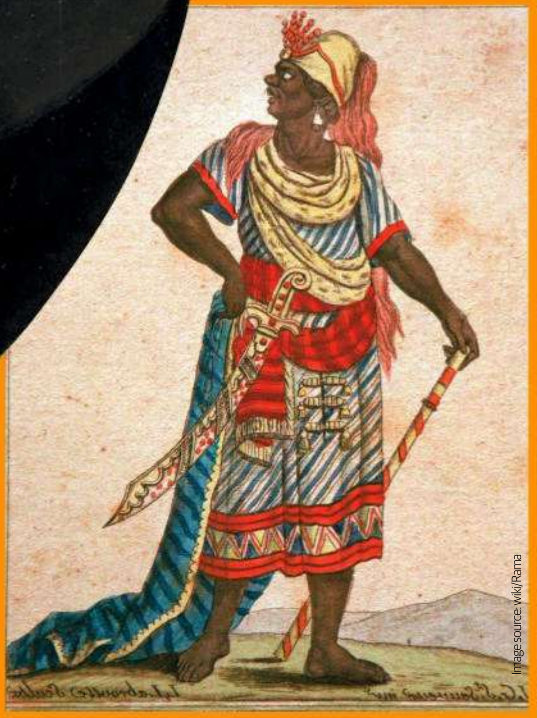


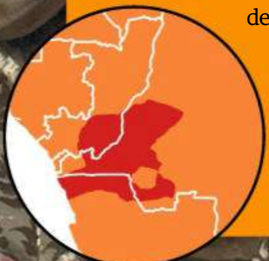
Image source: wiki/Rama

KINGDOM OF KONGO
Tangled up in Europe
1390 – 1914

Taking its name from the Kikongo language spoken in west-central Africa, south of the Congo River, a federation of Kikongo-speaking people was formed through the marriage of Nima a Nzima, of the Mpemba Kasi, and Luqueni Luansanze, of the Mbata, in 1390. From this, a monarchy was gradually established.

The Portuguese made contact with the Kingdom of Kongo, now established with Mbanza Kongo as its capital, in 1483. In 1491, both the manikongo (king), Nzinga a Nkuwu, and his son, Mvemba a Nzinga, were baptised, taking the Christian names João I Nzinga a Nkuwu and Afonso I Mvemba a Nzinga. Thereafter, the fate of the kingdom was heavily tied to the Portuguese and Europe, such as when warriors, called the Jagas, overran the country in 1568 and the Portuguese were needed to assist in their expulsion. In return, the colony of Angola was allowed to be formed. Kongolese ambassadors were also sent to Europe to ingratiate the kingdom with foreign powers.

Ultimately, the two could not coexist peacefully forever, coming to a head at the Battle of Mbwila on 29 October 1665, where manikongo António I Nvita a Nkanga was killed in battle. From then the kingdom began to fracture, and descended into civil war for the rest of the 17th century, holding together as a looser, more fractious kingdom until it was finally subsumed by Portugal in 1914.



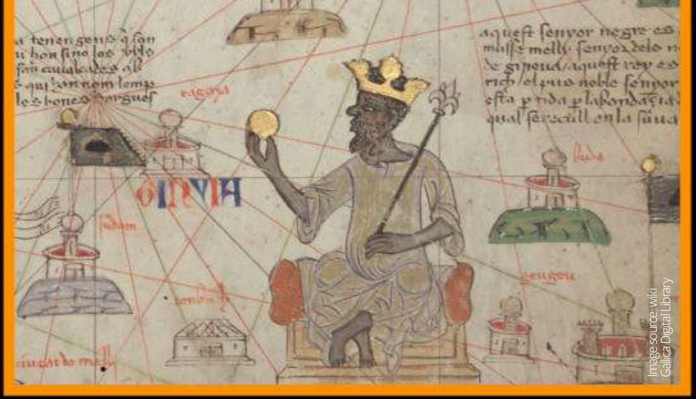


Image source: wiki Gallica Digital Library

SONGHAI EMPIRE

By land and by water **1460 – 1591**

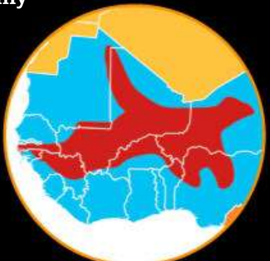
© Getty Images

The Songhai people are thought to have become established in their capital of Gao around 800 CE. They began to flourish from the 11th century until it became part of the Mali Empire from 1325, though the city was never taxed.

As the Mali Empire declined, the Songhai ascended under the leadership of Sonni Ali the Great. He used his fleet of canoes and expert cavalry to great effect, conquering the lands around the Songhai. His reputation was so great that it was rumoured he had magical powers.

After his death, one of his generals, Mohammed Ture, took power in 1493. Being a devout Muslim, his expansions of the empire took on a more religious character.

Engaging more with the Muslim world, such as the Caliph of Egypt, Mohammed Ture was made the Caliph of Sudan. Trade saw a massive improvement, and during the 16th century, the empire became rich thanks to the export of gold, nuts and slaves. However, as the century unfolded, the empire fell into civil war as drought and disease had the cumulative effect of chipping away at its riches and health. Finally, the Moroccan army invaded, looking to control the gold trade of the region.



MALI EMPIRE

A kingdom of commerce **1235 – 1670**

When looking for great African empires, Mali and the great Mansa Musa are often mentioned. Credited as the richest man to have ever lived, the King of the Mali Empire had a seismic impact on the region around him, but the story of his empire started earlier.

It actually goes back to the rebellion of Sundiata Keita, sometimes known as the 'Lion King', who overthrew Susa control with the Malinké people in 1230 and set up a new independent nation in western Africa. They secured the gold-rich lands around them, and united the other Malinké communities too. Thanks to its gold (and salt) trade, it became a commercial hub for the region.

This is what Mansa Musa inherited as king in 1307, but he still managed to double the size of the empire during his reign. His cultural contribution was also significant. Mali was a Muslim nation, and Musa is said to have given away his gold on a pilgrimage to Mecca. On his way back he also founded religious learning centres and schools, creating a lasting legacy for the region.

Ultimately, the empire became overstretched. After Mansa Musa's death, infighting and poor leadership saw the empire decline until major cities like Gao and Timbuktu were lost.

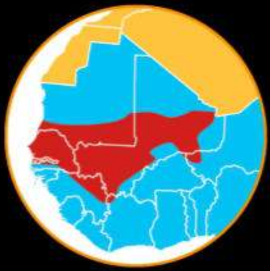


Image source: wiki/Paul R Burley

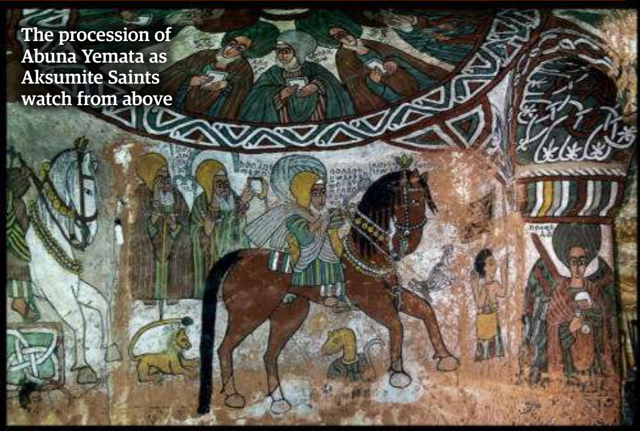
KINGDOM OF AKSUM

One of the four Great Kingdoms **c.100 CE – 940 CE**

"There are four great kingdoms on earth: the first is the Kingdom of Babylon and Persia; the second is the Kingdom of Rome; the third is the Kingdom of the Aksumites: the fourth is the kingdom of the Chinese." So said the Persian prophet Mani in the 3rd century CE. Located where modern Ethiopia and Eritrea now stand, the Aksumites grew rich and powerful thanks to their control of Red Sea trade, particularly in ivory and gold, and was thought to be the greatest market in the north east. It grew enough in strength to conquer the Kushites and burn the capital, Meroe, in the 4th century.

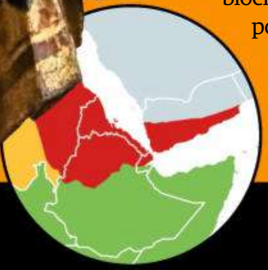
Interestingly, the kingdom converted to Christianity under King Ezana around 330 CE, making it one of the world's earliest Christian states, and meaning it was closely tied with Byzantine Egypt. Within the Ethiopian orthodox church, it is believed that the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Menelik I, son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, in Aksum.

The influence of South Arabia would see the dominance of Aksum challenged in the 7th and 8th centuries. Combined with its fertile lands drying up and trading routes blocked by emerging powers in the Middle East, the kingdom gradually declined.



The procession of Abuna Yemata as Aksumite Saints watch from above

© Alamy



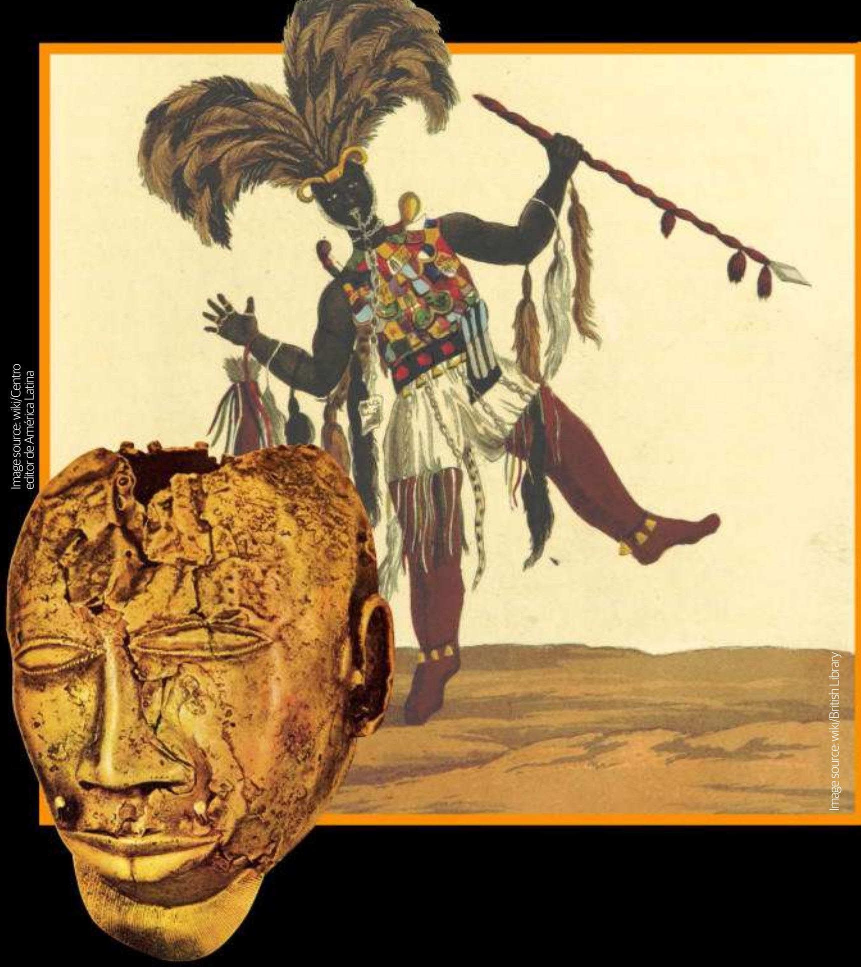


Image source: wiki/Centro editor de América Latina

Image source: wiki/British Library

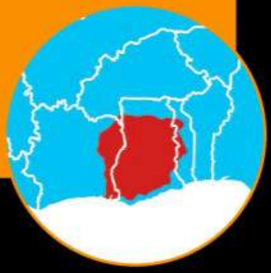
ASANTE EMPIRE

The golden kingdom **1701 – 1902**

In the late 17th century, a leader called Osei Tutu emerged and led successful campaigns to unify the Asante and other Akan peoples under his rule. Named Asantehene, meaning 'paramount chief', he organised his new state by centralising the trade of the new Asante Empire's most important export, gold. The metal was so common that gold dust was used in ornaments and to decorate the clothing of all its citizens, not just the wealthy.

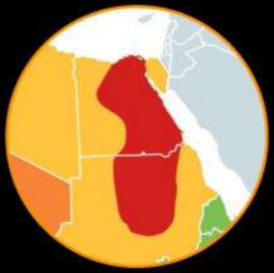
However, later in the 18th century, the slave trade took hold in the region, with an estimated 6,000-7,000 people a year sold into bondage from the Gold Coast. Asante was not excluded from this, and enslaved people became a massive export for the fledgling nation, often in exchange for firearms with which control and conquest of neighbours could be secured.

Britain banning the trade of enslaved people in 1807 resulted in trade disputes and further conflicts. The Asante defeated the British in 1824, but tensions flared again in 1863, ending with the occupation of the capital Kumasi in 1874 (but only for a day). The embarrassment of this defeat led to groups seceding from the empire, and ultimately the Asante were annexed into the British Gold Coast colony in 1902.



KINGDOM OF KUSH

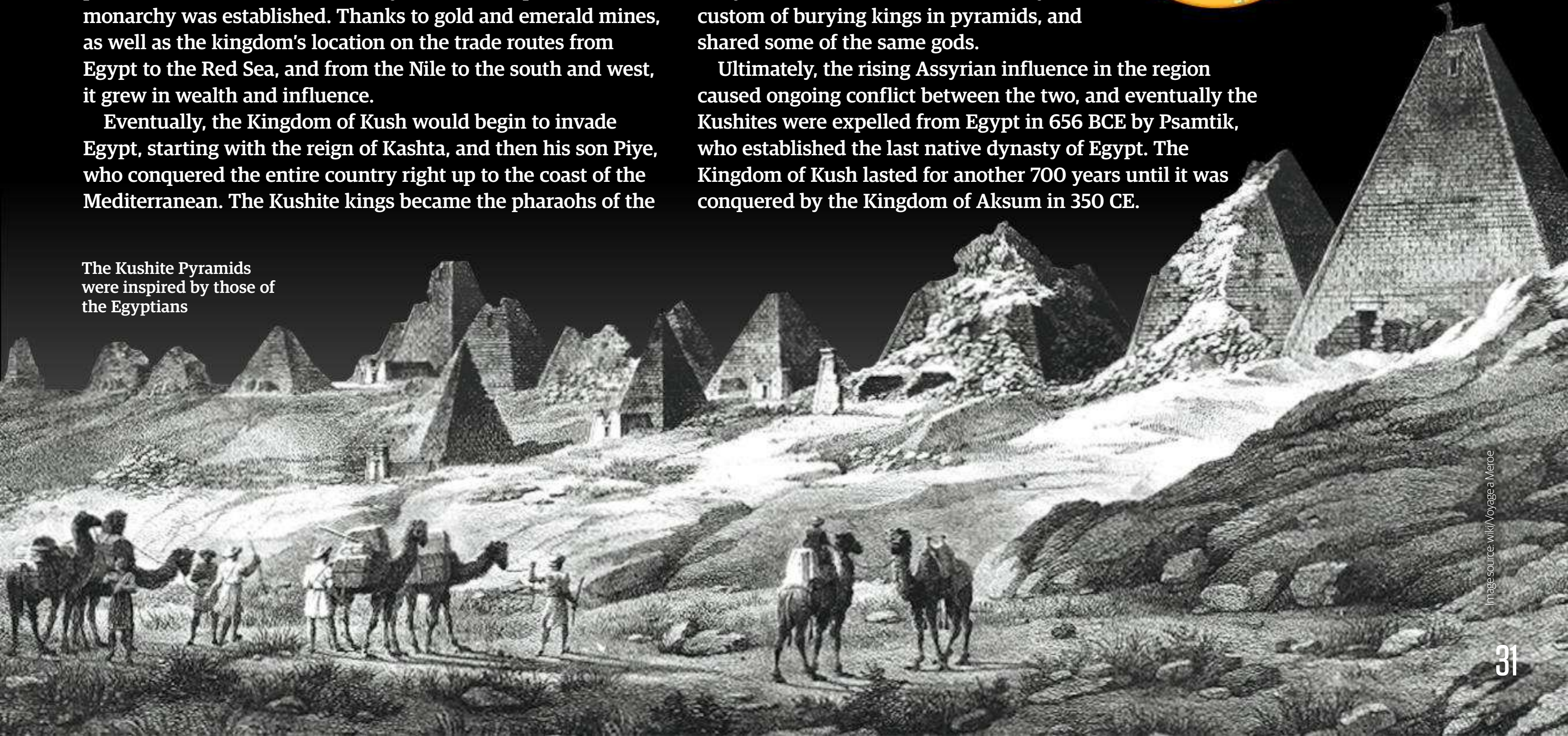
In the shadow of Egypt **1069 BCE – 350 CE**



Sitting just south of the famous civilisation in what is now the Republic of Sudan, the history of the Kushites is dominated by their relationship with Ancient Egypt. However, as Egyptian power declined in the 11th century BCE, an independent monarchy was established. Thanks to gold and emerald mines, as well as the kingdom's location on the trade routes from Egypt to the Red Sea, and from the Nile to the south and west, it grew in wealth and influence.

Eventually, the Kingdom of Kush would begin to invade Egypt, starting with the reign of Kashta, and then his son Piye, who conquered the entire country right up to the coast of the Mediterranean. The Kushite kings became the pharaohs of the 25th dynasty, lasting a century. Yet, the Kushites remained distinct, with their own hieroglyphs, language and culture. They did, however, share the funerary custom of burying kings in pyramids, and shared some of the same gods.

Ultimately, the rising Assyrian influence in the region caused ongoing conflict between the two, and eventually the Kushites were expelled from Egypt in 656 BCE by Psamtik, who established the last native dynasty of Egypt. The Kingdom of Kush lasted for another 700 years until it was conquered by the Kingdom of Aksum in 350 CE.



The Kushite Pyramids were inspired by those of the Egyptians

Image source: wiki/Voyage a Meroe

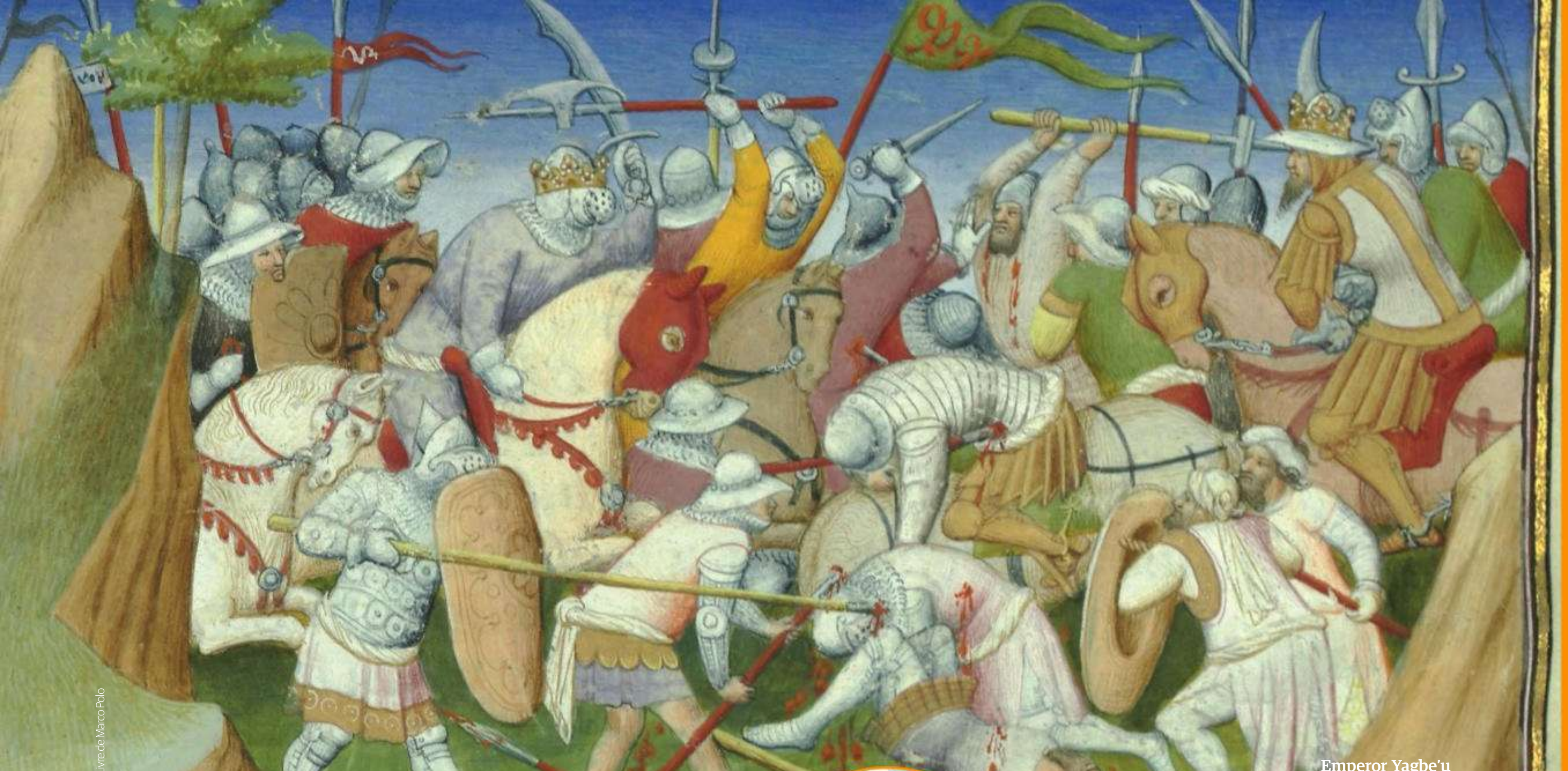
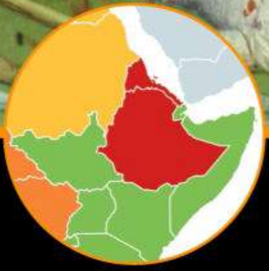


Image source: wiki/Le Livre de Marco Polo

Emperor Yagbe'u Seyon battles the Sultan of Ada



ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE

The endless kingdom c.1270 – 1769

From the Aksumite Empire to the overthrow of Haile Selassie, you could almost draw one unbroken line for the history of Ethiopia, sometimes also referred to as Abyssinia. What we're interested in is the Solomonic dynasty started by Yekuno Amlak that succeeded the brief Zagwe dynasty and claimed to reestablish its lineage to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

Trade along the Blue Nile was this nation's main source of income, though it also competed for access to the Red Sea with surrounding Muslim peoples. Under the leadership of Amda Seyon I from 1314 to 1344, the empire doubled in size, conquering communities to the south and east and establishing heavy taxes on the export of gold, ivory and enslaved people.

Conflict arose again in the mid-16th century with the rise of the Adal Sultanate. However, greater European interest in the Red Sea saw aid arrive from Portugal as 400 musketeers arrived to train Ethiopian troops, and their subsequent hit-and-run tactics managed to break the Muslim army.

Near its end, the Ethiopian Empire enjoyed something of a cultural renaissance under the leadership of Empress Mentewab, who co-ruled with her son and then grandson. However, growing regional divisions saw the kingdom collapse in 1769 and enter an era of feudalism.

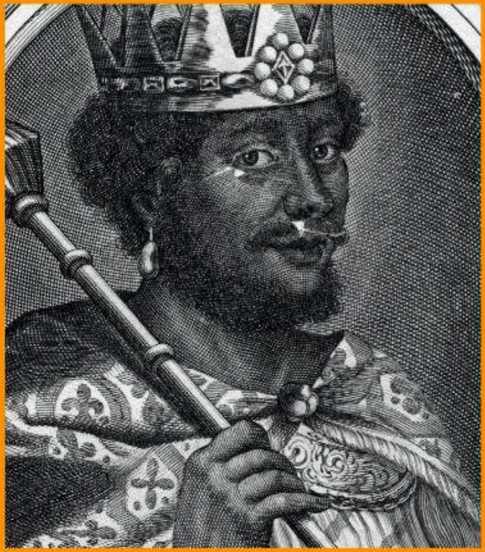


Image source: wiki/tirage original

MUTAPA EMPIRE

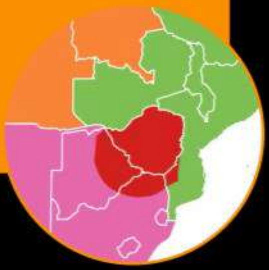
Lord of plundered lands

c.1430 – 1760

The Mutapa Empire is an interesting example of a kingdom that seems to have essentially migrated in order to achieve success. Originating as the Kingdom of Zimbabwe, it's understood that food shortages forced the warrior prince, Nyatsimba Mutota, to seek out salt and other resources to help his people. Identifying and conquering a portion of the Zambezi River Valley as a rich new home, he set up a new Empire of Mutapa some 300km to the north of his original domain.

We're somewhat reliant on the accounts of European travellers through the region for the details of how this new kingdom operated, but it's understood that Mutota ruled with a light touch, and that it was his son, Mwene Matope, who ultimately expanded the empire to include the entire Zambezi River Valley, as well as what is now Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and part of Mozambique, all the way to the Indian Ocean. Matope took the title mwenemutapa, meaning 'lord of the plundered lands'.

From this vast expanse he levied taxes as well as establishing trade, most likely including goods from India and China, which would have been very lucrative. However, the empire began to decline after his reign in the mid-1500s, thanks in part to the growing interest of Portugal, which deposed the king in 1629 and imposed their own ruler.



ALMOHAD CALIPHATE

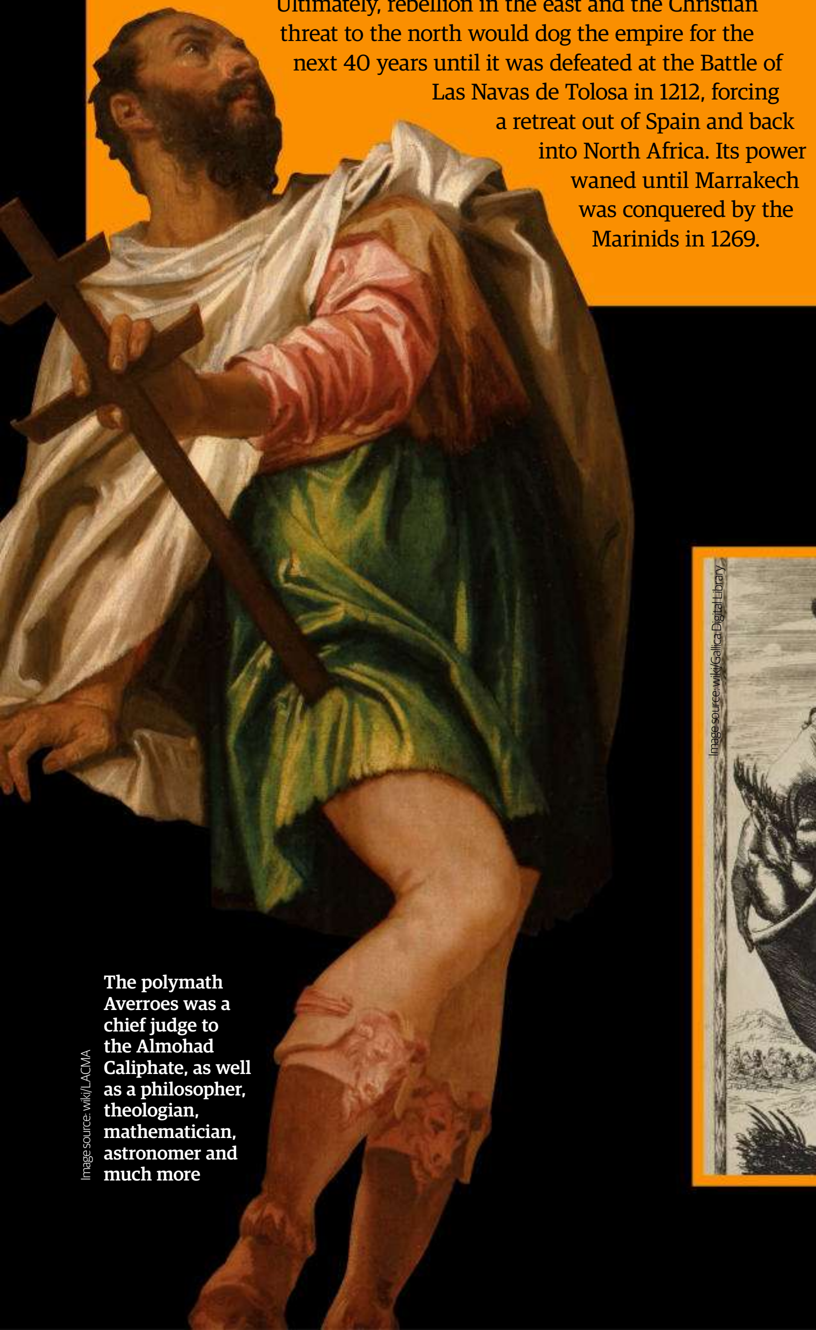
Cross-continental empire

1121 – 1269

This Berber confederation looked to challenge a number of standing powers when it emerged in 1121 under the leadership of Ibn Tumart. A religious teacher, he sought the moral reform of the ruling Almoravids, who controlled much of North Africa, as well as Islamic Spain. Supported by some of the most powerful Berber tribes, the self-proclaimed mahdi (meaning well guided, a messianic monicker in Shia Islam) attempted to unite the region on stronger religious principles. Ultimately, his successors would finally conquer the region in 1147 and capture Marrakech, which became the new Almohad Caliphate's capital.

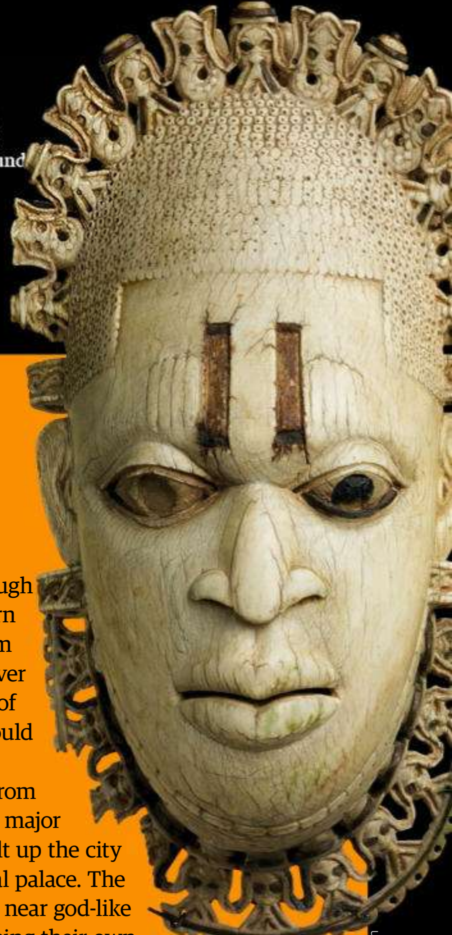
In 1172, the Caliphate conquered Sevilla and took control of Islamic Spain. With Marrakech and Sevilla as its two capitals and with ports across the Mediterranean and Atlantic coast, the Almohad Empire was able to build its wealth and reinvest in the arts and architecture, which thrived. Urbanisation increased, with fortifications, gardens and elaborate religious buildings established.

Ultimately, rebellion in the east and the Christian threat to the north would dog the empire for the next 40 years until it was defeated at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212, forcing a retreat out of Spain and back into North Africa. Its power waned until Marrakech was conquered by the Marinids in 1269.



The polymath Averroes was a chief judge to the Almohad Caliphate, as well as a philosopher, theologian, mathematician, astronomer and much more

Image source: wiki/LACMA



A lot of Benin art now sits in museums around Europe and America

Image source: wiki/Met Museum

BENIN EMPIRE

A land of gods and art

c.1180 – 1897

The empire of Benin began in an almost mythological fashion, passed down through oral history, of the Edo people of southern Nigeria asking the neighbouring kingdom of Ife if one of their princes could take over from the Ogisos kings, known as 'rulers of the sky'. The first oba (king) of Benin would be Eweka, the son of this prince.

Later, it was under Ewuare the Great from 1440 to 1473 that Benin would grow as a major power as he conquered territory and built up the city of Benin itself with walls and a new royal palace. The successive kings of Benin would take on near god-like standing within the community, developing their own cults among the people that included human sacrifice.

Like many of the most successful African empires, gold and ivory were key exports, which Benin was able to sell through Portuguese traders. The nation's artisans and artists were also important thanks to their ivory, brass and wood creations. Soon, however, Benin would also begin capturing adults and children in neighbouring communities to sell into slavery with American and European traders.

Ultimately, infighting among the royal family would see Benin begin to fracture and foreign influence increase until Britain finally saw an opportunity to invade in 1897 and captured the region, burning the city of Benin.

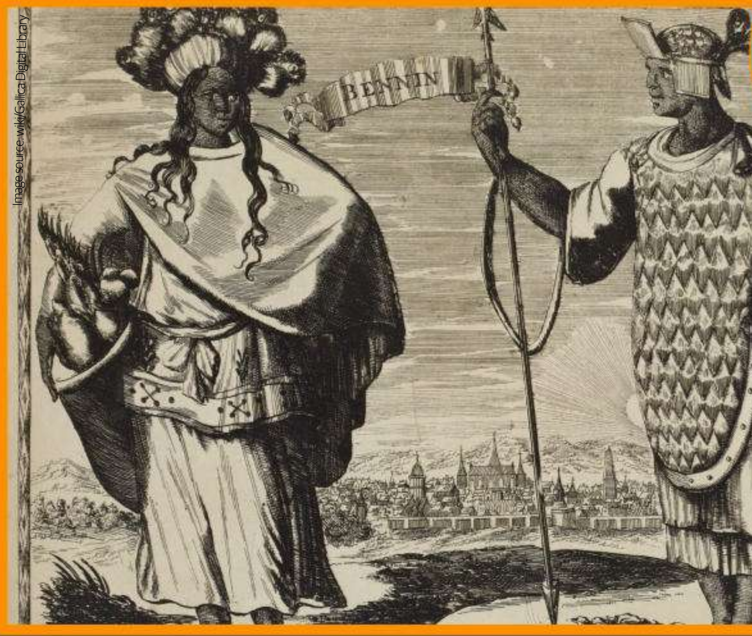


Image source: wiki/Gallica Digital Library

The Lion King

◆

The Mali Empire's legendary founder was reputedly as strong as a lion, but what is fact and what is fiction in his origin story?

Written by April Madden

Malian griots, or praise singers, have recounted the *Epic of Sundiata*, the country's founding myth, since the 13th century

A key plot point in the *Epic of Sundiata* is the capture of a magical musical instrument that's now central to Mali's culture

In the story, the disabled and exiled Sundiata learns to walk with help of a branch of baobab

The Mali Empire is famous for being ruled by the richest man in history. But further back in its history, its founder, Sundiata Keita, is the subject of a legendary epic that could rival Britain's iconic King Arthur for drama, magic and destiny.

The *Epic of Sundiata* is a rich oral history sung by successive generations of griots, West Africa's incredible musician-historians. It tells the tale of a handsome prince who is given a prophecy: if he marries an ugly woman, their son will grow up to be a mighty king. The prince does so, but the child that is born, Sundiata, is disabled, and the prince's other wives plot to remove the boy from the line of succession in favour of their own sons. Cast out into exile, Sundiata learns to walk with the aid of a baobab branch. Meanwhile, after their father's death, his usurping half-brother's rule is threatened by a powerful sorcerer-prince. The people send for their rightful ruler, Sundiata, who has become "as strong as a lion". Sundiata defeats the wicked prince with an arrow fletched with a white rooster feather, while his griot advisor captures the prince's magical balafon (a type of xylophone made with gourds). The invasion is repelled, Sundiata assumes his rightful throne, and a musical tradition that is key to Malian culture is established.

The *Epic of Sundiata* sounds like a fairy tale, but Sundiata Keita was a real person, the great-uncle of the famous Mansa Musa. He is recorded in contemporary histories, as is his wizardly enemy, the 13th century Sosso king Soumaoro Kanté, who in reality has a much more nuanced historical reputation than the *Epic of Sundiata* gives him. Their fateful clash was the Battle of Kirina in around 1235, at which the real, historical Sundiata led a force made up of a coalition of smaller kingdoms to rout an invader that had been emboldened by the collapse of the Ghana Empire. Sundiata may not have really captured a magical musical instrument (although it is claimed to exist, and to be in the possession of a family in the Guinean village of Niagassola) but what he did manage to grab was first a kingdom and then, as his newly created army ventured further, an empire – one that would shortly become so wealthy and powerful that its most famous ruler would be unrivalled in the annals of history.

MANSA MUSA

The Richest Man in History

◆

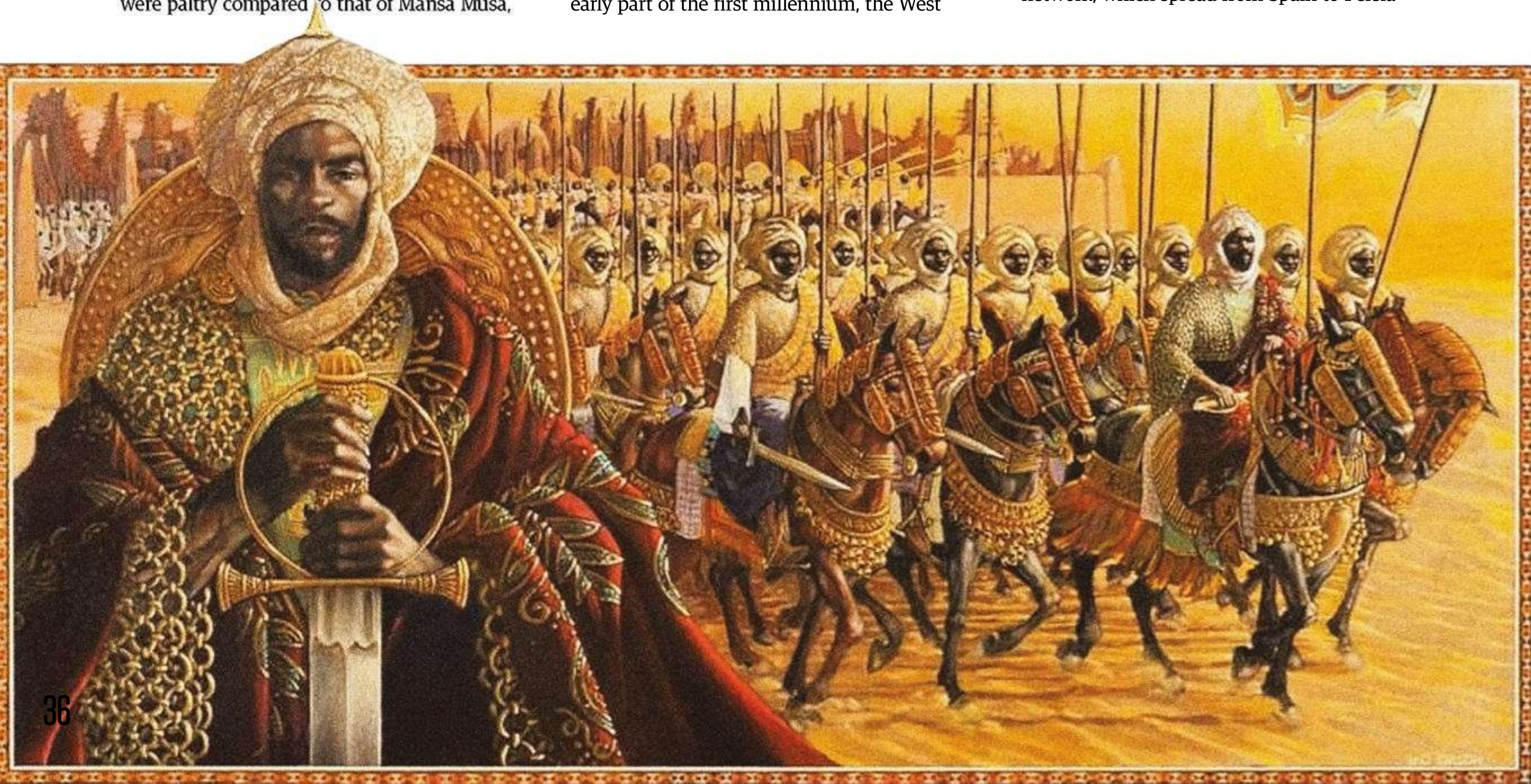
The Emperor of Mali was the wealthiest man on the planet – but you've probably never heard of him

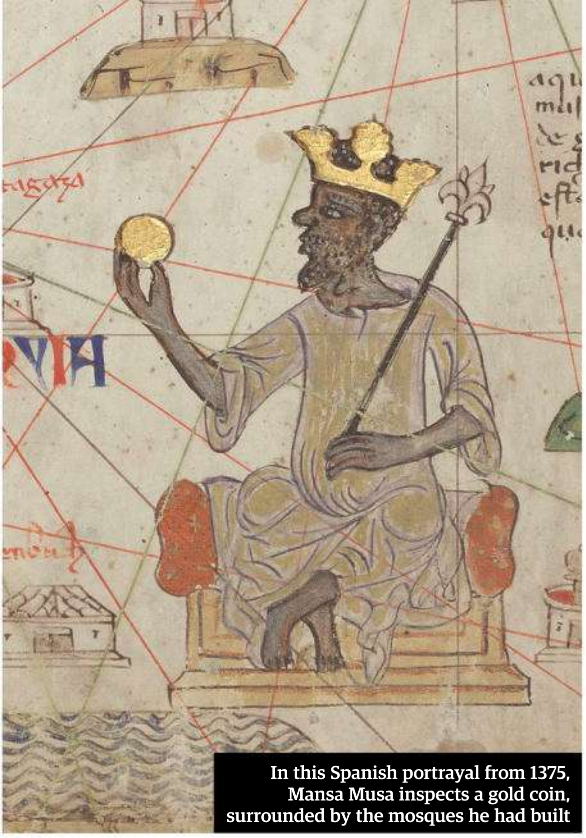
Written by Jem Duducu

If you wanted to describe someone as wealthy, you might say that they are as 'rich as Crassus' or call them 'a Rockefeller'. However, while Ancient Roman businessman Marcus Licinius Crassus and American oil baron John D Rockefeller have became bywords for extravagant wealth, their respective fortunes were paltry compared to that of Mansa Musa, the 14th century emperor of Mali and the world's richest-ever man.

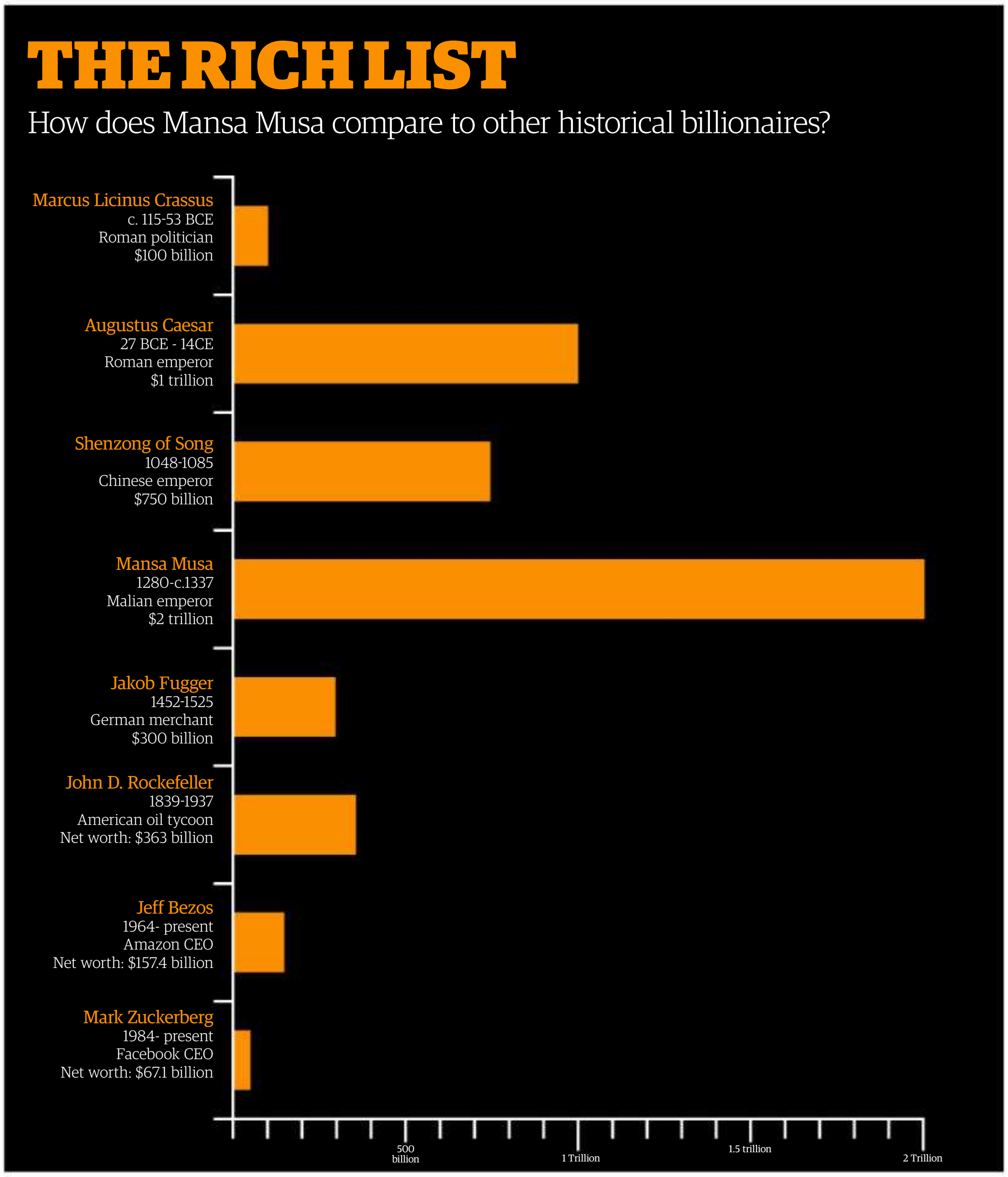
The Mali Empire (which in the West African Manding languages is known as Manden Kurufaba) was founded in the early 1200s and lasted into the late 1600s. It started in Niani, a town in the very east of modern-day Guinea, located on the banks of the River Niger. In the early part of the first millennium, the West African Ghanian Empire declined to the point where territories on its fringes felt emboldened to make a move for independence.

This was, of course, to the detriment of the old regime. At the same time, trade routes started to change in favour of the region around Niani which had been a Muslim region for centuries. It was positioned at the end of a vast trade network, which spread from Spain to Persia





In this Spanish portrayal from 1375, Mansa Musa inspects a gold coin, surrounded by the mosques he had built



THE RICH LIST

How does Mansa Musa compare to other historical billionaires?

and whose epicentre was the Persian capital of Baghdad. Another important place was Cairo, the seat of the Muslim Caliph, as well as the economic centre of Egypt.

Trade plus growing territories enabled a new dynasty of rulers to emerge. The first of these was Sundiata Keita, also known as the Lion of Mali, who ruled from roughly 1235-1255 as 'Mansa'. This is a local word for emperor.

The mansas increased their influence and power in the traditional way by conquering new territories, but they were successful in other ways as well. Mansa Uli, Sundiata Keita's son, increased agricultural productivity in the empire. Others ensured that the city of Timbuktu had a first class university, attracting scholars from all over the Islamic world, who came to share their ideas in the fields of mathematics and astronomy.

By the early 1300s, things were going so well for the empire that Mansa Abubakari II led an expedition to 'explore the limits of the ocean' (the Atlantic). It is alleged that he fitted out thousands of seaworthy vessels and set off on his travels, leaving a man named Musa, the great-nephew of Sundiata, as his regent. This was not the first time a reigning monarch had left a designated deputy in charge. The mansas were Muslims, and as one of the pillars of Islam is that every good Muslim should go on pilgrimage to Mecca, pious mansas could be gone for a year or more in pursuit of their religious obligations. So, as Abubakari II headed off into the ocean sunset, Musa became the ruler in all but name. Exactly how far the emperor went or where he might have visited are still hot topics of discussion, but we know for certain that he never came back. Musa was crowned Mansa Musa I in 1312.

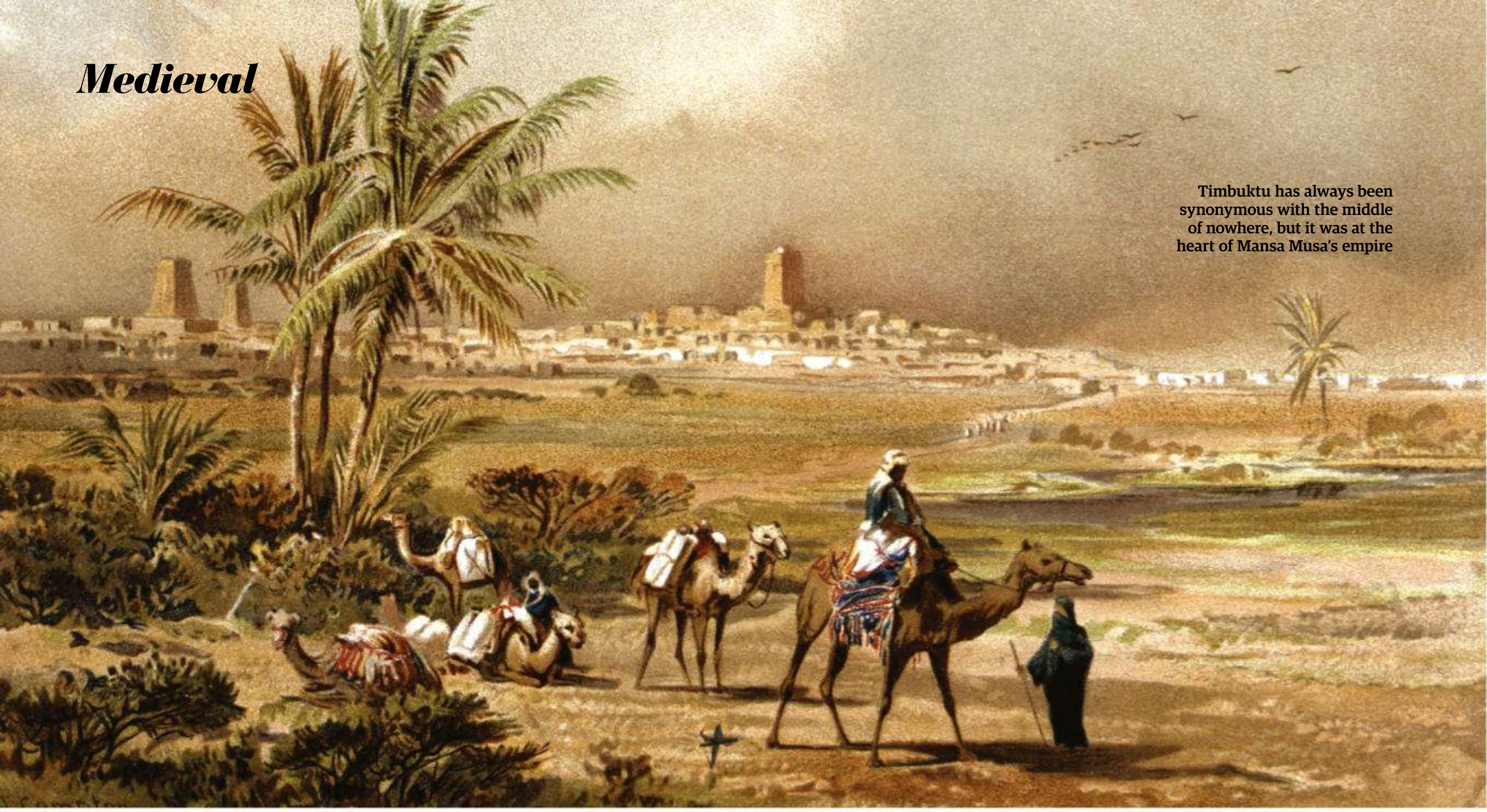
Rolling In It

However, the most remarkable story of the empire is that of Mali's gold. By the time of Mansa Musa, historians have estimated that about half of the known world's gold (not including that of the Americas) was held by the empire. Mali was dripping in the stuff.

The great Sankoré Mosque in Timbuktu is now a World Heritage site, and it was paid for by Mansa Musa, who hired the famous architect Abu Ishaq al-Sahili to come all the way from Andalusia (a Muslim territory in modern-day Spain) to design and build it. For his hard work, the architect was rewarded with about 200 kilograms of gold. That's about $8,000,000 in today's money, so it's safe to say his fee probably took care of his travel expenses.

Mali's reputation as a source of gold was so widespread that a Spanish map of 1375 depicts Mali with a picture of the mansa holding a gold coin. Putting values on historic wealth is notoriously tricky. We can work out exchanges and inflation, but that often doesn't represent the whole picture. What we can say is that at this time and in this place, gold was a very rare commodity, far rarer than today, which probably means equivalent amounts were worth much more in the 1300s than they are today. Add to that Mali's lucrative trade in salt – another surprisingly rare commodity in the Middle Ages – and we see a degree of affluence that puts contemporary England's wool production riches in the shadows. Mansa Musa was the richest man on the planet, dwarfing the personal wealth of everyone from the Holy Roman Emperors to the Mongol Khans.

But the outside world knew almost nothing about this at the start of Mansa Musa's reign. Located in sub-Saharan Africa, Mali was remote from the rest of the Islamic world, and while traders knew that certain commodities were coming out of Africa, they don't seem to have been tied to a specific power. This all changed with Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca, the defining event of his reign. Before he left, Musa followed his predecessor's example and appointed a deputy to make decisions while he was away and to succeed him if he didn't come back. This time Mansa Musa's son, Magha, was chosen. While the fulfilment of a religious requirement



Timbuktu has always been synonymous with the middle of nowhere, but it was at the heart of Mansa Musa's empire

was the primary purpose of the journey, Musa also intended to put Mali on the map of the Muslim world. It could, therefore, be argued that Mansa Musa's pilgrimage was the most expensive and the most successful PR campaign in history.

Enroute to Mecca

In 1324, Mansa Musa set off from Niani on the nearly 5,500-mile journey to Mecca. This means that by the time of his return in 1325, he had travelled at least 11,000 miles, an impressive feat in the 14th century, even for a rich man.

Musa travelled up through the Sahara desert to the shores of the Mediterranean in Algeria and, from there, headed along the coast to Egypt and then Cairo. Though this might sound like an arduous journey even for a seasoned adventurer, Musa made sure to take all his home comforts with him. For starters, he had 80 camels for the sole purpose of transporting gold, each carrying up to 136 kilograms, meaning that the camels alone had (again, in modern terms) about $400 million worth of gold bullion. The chronicles record that this entourage further consisted of 60,000 slaves, plus Musa's personal retinue of 12,000 female servants, each of them allegedly carrying 1.8 kilograms of gold, so another $15 million. The vanguard of the procession was headed by 500 slaves, each carrying a gold-adorned staff, and members of the entourage were dressed in fine brocades and Persian silks.

While these figures alone are stunning, it must also be remembered that all of these 72,000 people (plus Musa) had to be fed every day for about a year. The cost of that alone would have been eye-watering, especially since Mansa was used to dining most lavishly.

The purpose of taking nearly $½ billion worth of gold on pilgrimage was not for fees or bribes, but for charity. Another pillar of Islam is Zakat, the giving of 2.5 per cent of one's assets each year to benefit the poor. While it is tempting to claim that the gold destined for Mecca was therefore just 2.5 per cent of Mansa Musa's wealth, it was more likely a grand gesture, perhaps to compensate for the years he hadn't got around to fulfilling his religious obligations. Musa was full of generosity, and he changed some people's lives with the number of gifts to the poor that he distributed. His grand tour was virtually paved with gold. It was also said that every week, wherever he found himself for Friday prayers, he paid for a mosque to be built. As he was away for about a year, that's roughly 52 mosques to add to the bill.

Musa was warmly received by the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, al-Nasir Muhammad, during his layover in Cario. However, their meeting got off

> "A Spanish map of 1375 depicts Mansa Musa holding a gold coin"

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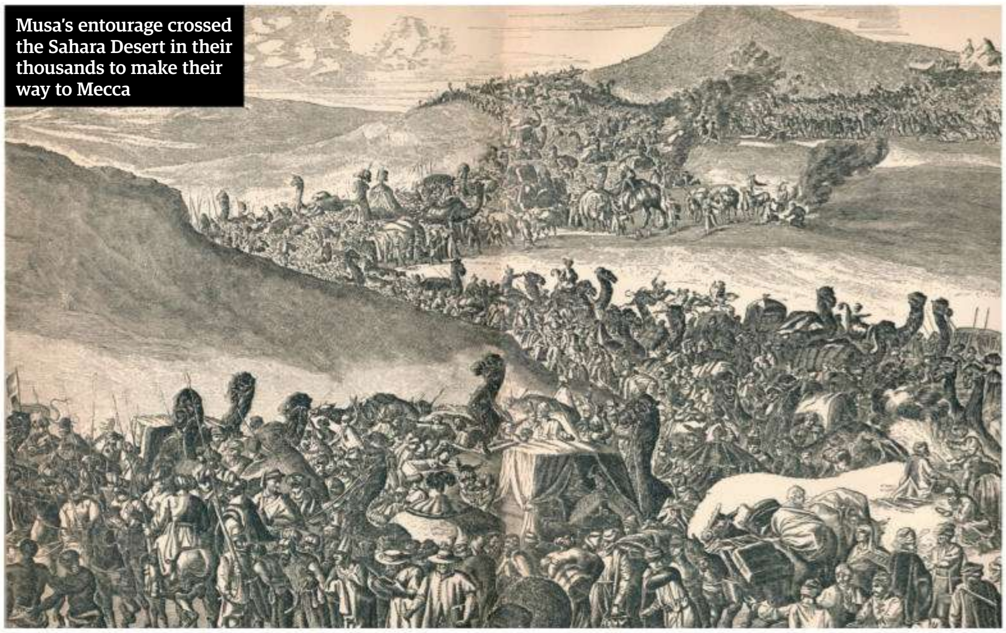


Musa's entourage crossed the Sahara Desert in their thousands to make their way to Mecca to a rocky start. Musa initially refused even to see the sultan, and once in his presence refused to kneel before him. Fortunately he was persuaded to do so, and an unpleasant diplomatic incident was averted.

The sultan had been brought up in the dying days of the Crusades and had faced attacks not only by rival Muslim powers, but even by the Mongols from Persia. Indeed, by the time he met Musa, he had been on and off the throne three times (but this time he stayed in power until his death in 1341), so Musa was a welcome distraction from more immediate and dangerous challenges. Mali was too far away to be a threat, and its ruler was a pious man, who insisted on showering the sultan – along with every other court emir and royal office holder – with gifts. What was not to like about him?

Credit Crunch

Unfortunately, all of this generosity had unintended consequences, which ended up being a greater threat than all the Mongols in the East. When everyone had gold, naturally prices went up. When there were more gold coins than anything else, the price of essential items such as

Gold was of crucial importance to the economy of the Mali Empire

MUSA'S EMPIRE

SALT MINES

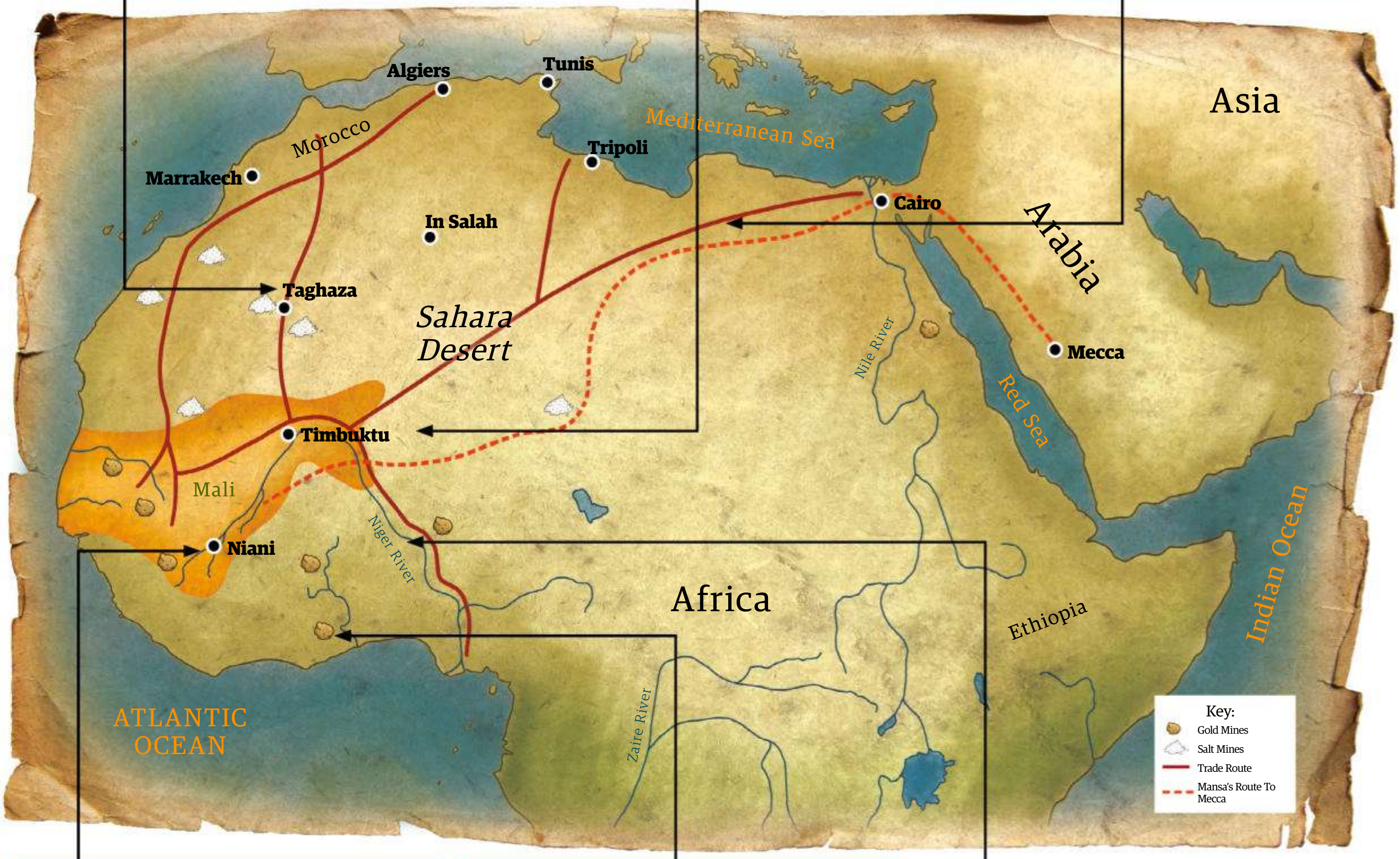
Rock salt was also a hugely profitable export, used in food preparation and preservation. Its value was at times literally worth its weight in gold. It was mined by slaves in salt flats throughout the Sahara desert, most notably at Taghaza.

TIMBUKTU

Timbuktu, although its name is now synonymous with a place in the middle of nowhere, was once a thriving hub of wealth and people in the Mali Empire. Its mud brick buildings were home to a plethora of shops, universities, mosques and opulent homes.

TRADE ROUTES

Trade was the key to Mali's wealth. Merchants would pack up their camels with gold, salt and other items, then embark on long journeys across the Sahara desert to reach cities as far away as Tripoli and Cairo – on the other side of Africa.



MALI'S CAPITAL CITY

Niani was the capital of the empire during the reign of Mansa Musa and continued to be the capital in the 1600s. It was the centre of the government and commerce making it one of the most important cities on the continent. During the reign of Mansa Musa, Niani had a population of approximately 100,000. London at the time by contrast only had a population in the tens of thousands.

GOLD MINES

It is thought that much of Mansa Musa's gold came from the rich deposits in the Ashanti region of modern-day Ghana. This is an area so rich with gold that it became known simply as 'the Gold Coast' during British imperial rule, and continues to be one of the world's largest exporters of gold, producing 100,000 kilograms a year.

RIVER NIGER

Africa's longest river after the Nile and the Congo, the 4,200-kilometre (2,600-mile) Niger flows from Timbuktu to the Atlantic Ocean. As well as irrigating fields used for farming, this made it an excellent route for transporting goods around the Malian Empire.

bread increased exponentially. The economy of the entire Maghreb region was broken, and suffered hyperinflation as an inadvertent result of Mansa's good intentions.

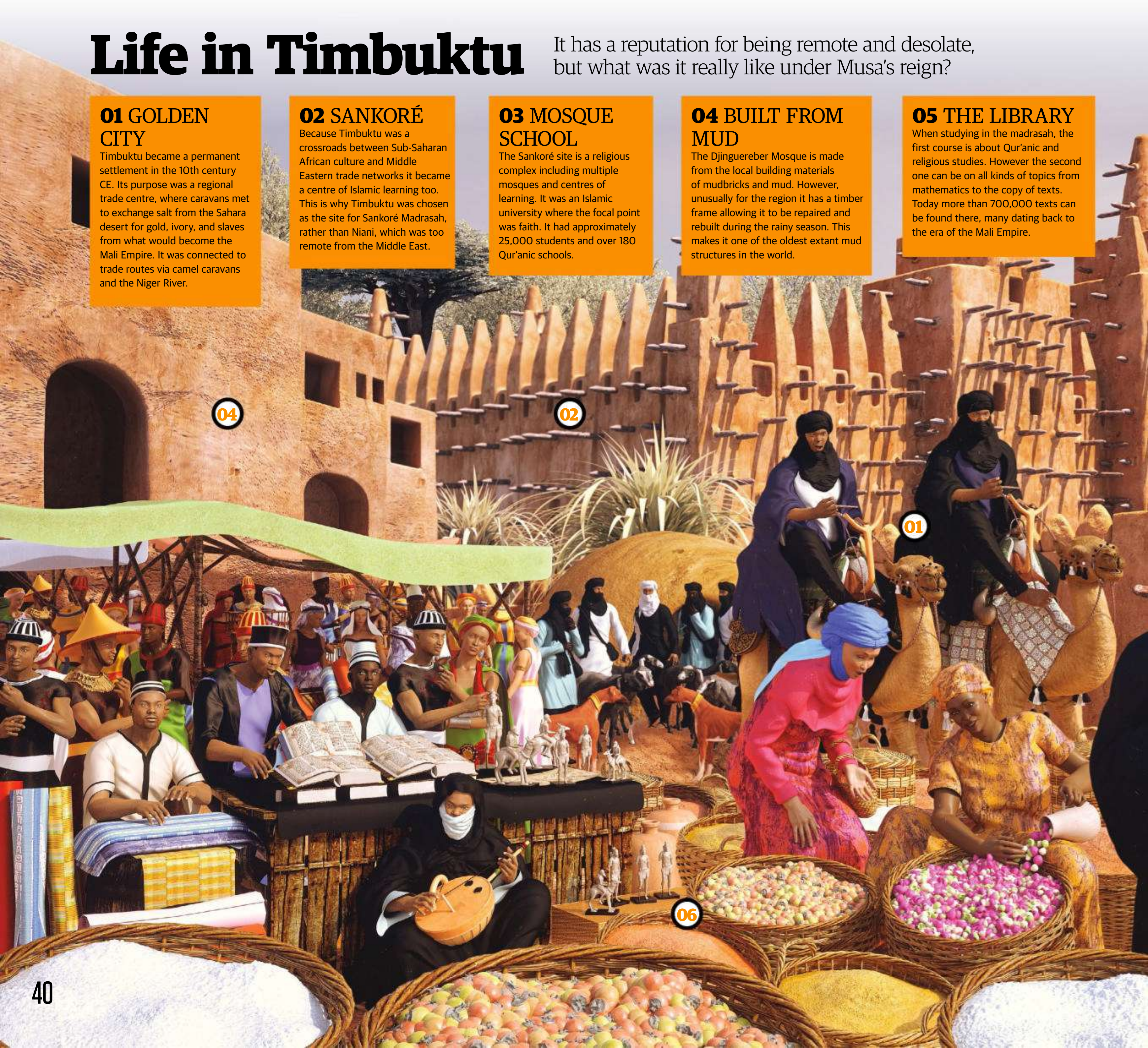
The impact of all this was greatest in Cairo. On his return from Mecca, Musa recognised the economic chaos that he had wreaked. He tried to fix it by ordering his retinue to borrow all the gold they could from money-lenders in Cairo. This was to be done at a high rate of interest. So now Musa created debt for himself on a trip that had already cost nearly $½ billion. While the gesture helped, it didn't get rid of the problem. Musa's borrowing in an attempt to adjust gold prices makes him the only man in history to directly control the price of gold in the Mediterranean region.

Meanwhile back in Mali, Gao, a city that was prone to rebelling, had risen up against the empire. By the time Musa was on the return leg of his journey, his son Magha had brought it to heel, but was still a hotbed of defiance. Musa decided to detour his returning entourage through the city – some 1,000 miles east of his capital at Niani – not to gloat over the empire's victory in defeating the rebels, but to wow the locals with displays of the piety and riches of their benevolent and powerful ruler. It worked. The city remained part of the Mali Empire for more than 100 years. Musa also invested in great architectural projects in the city to impress its residents and remind them what it meant to be part of the great empire.

While Christianity didn't feature in the Mali Empire (that would come much later from European missionaries), there existed local shamanistic traditions that might have had the power to rival Islam. As a devout Muslim, Musa wanted to ensure that nobody would be distracted by these pagan temptations. It is, therefore, unsurprising that while he was responsible for

Life in Timbuktu

It has a reputation for being remote and desolate, but what was it really like under Musa's reign?



01 GOLDEN CITY

Timbuktu became a permanent settlement in the 10th century CE. Its purpose was a regional trade centre, where caravans met to exchange salt from the Sahara desert for gold, ivory, and slaves from what would become the Mali Empire. It was connected to trade routes via camel caravans and the Niger River.

02 SANKORÉ

Because Timbuktu was a crossroads between Sub-Saharan African culture and Middle Eastern trade networks it became a centre of Islamic learning too. This is why Timbuktu was chosen as the site for Sankoré Madrasah, rather than Niani, which was too remote from the Middle East.

03 MOSQUE SCHOOL

The Sankoré site is a religious complex including multiple mosques and centres of learning. It was an Islamic university where the focal point was faith. It had approximately 25,000 students and over 180 Qur'anic schools.

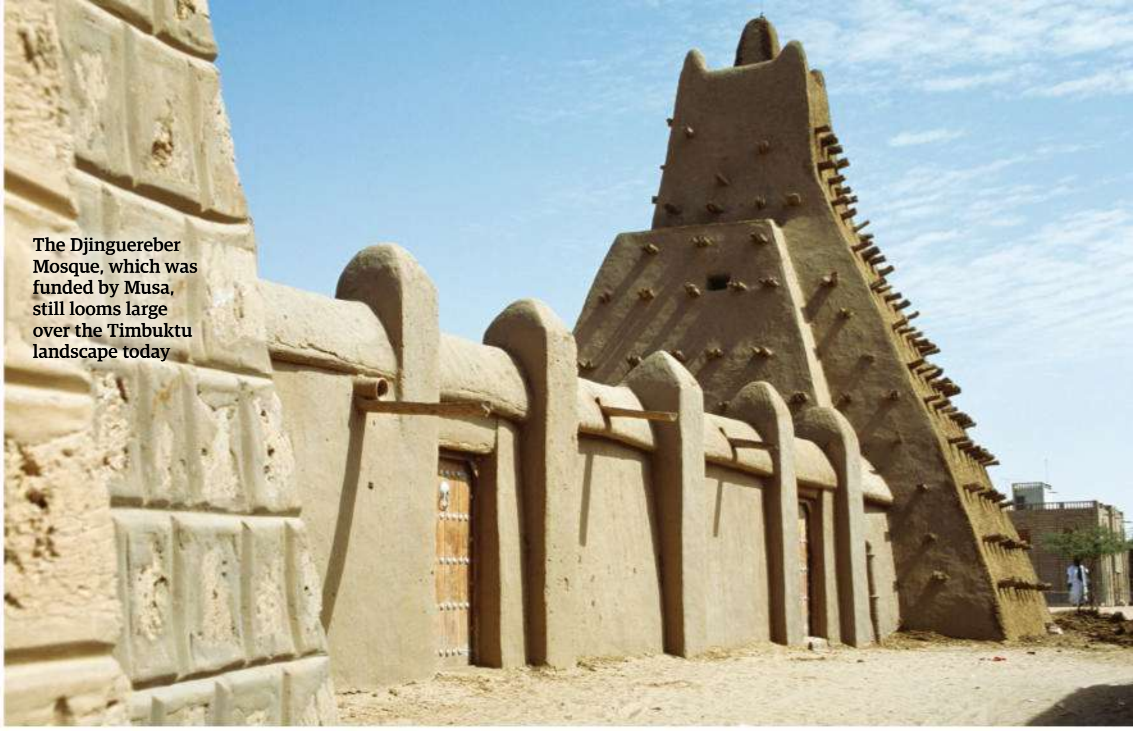
04 BUILT FROM MUD

The Djinguereber Mosque is made from the local building materials of mudbricks and mud. However, unusually for the region it has a timber frame allowing it to be repaired and rebuilt during the rainy season. This makes it one of the oldest extant mud structures in the world.

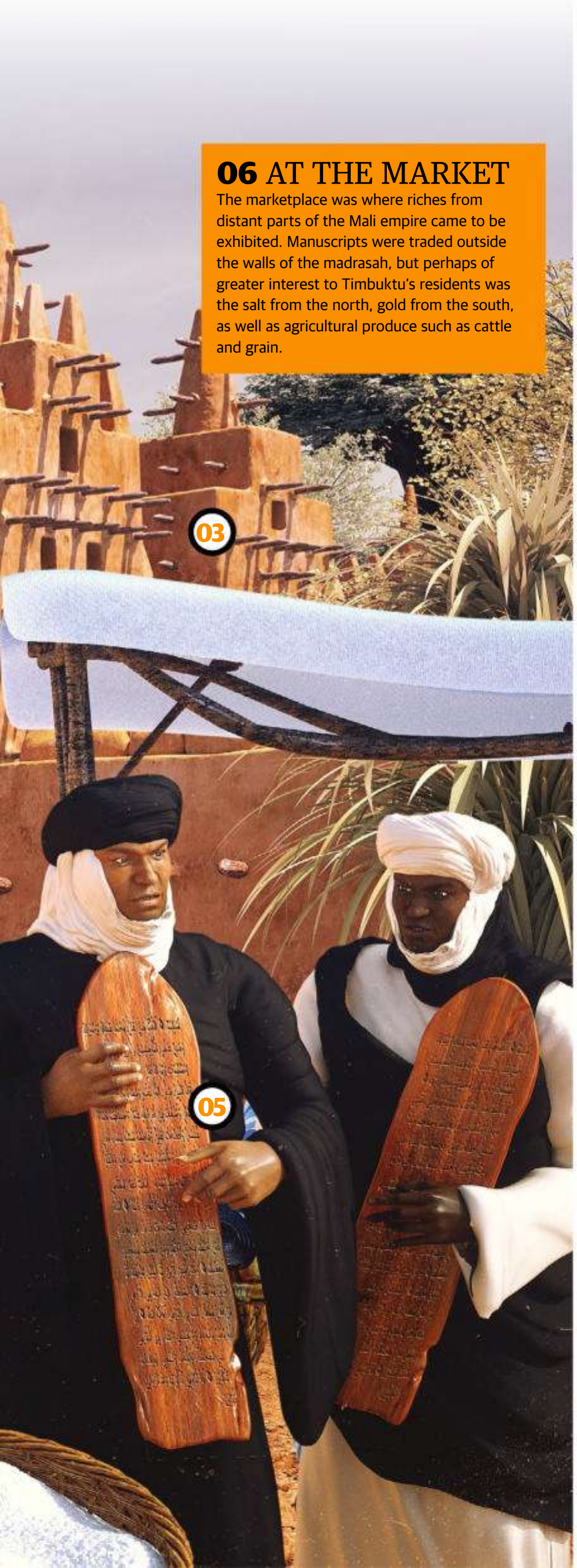
05 THE LIBRARY

When studying in the madrasah, the first course is about Qur'anic and religious studies. However the second one can be on all kinds of topics from mathematics to the copy of texts. Today more than 700,000 texts can be found there, many dating back to the era of the Mali Empire.

An Islamic manuscript found in Timbuktu, the intellectual hub of Musa's empire



The Djinguereber Mosque, which was funded by Musa, still looms large over the Timbuktu landscape today



06 AT THE MARKET

The marketplace was where riches from distant parts of the Mali empire came to be exhibited. Manuscripts were traded outside the walls of the madrasah, but perhaps of greater interest to Timbuktu's residents was the salt from the north, gold from the south, as well as agricultural produce such as cattle and grain.

"Mansa Musa recognised the economic chaos he had wreaked"

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many impressive architectural achievements, mosques and madrasahs figured the most heavily among them.

While it's tempting to focus on construction and trade, it shouldn't be forgotten that Niani is a long way from the African coast, which meant there was a lot of land to be conquered before the Malians could access the seas. And cities like Gao and Timbuktu were far away from the capital, which shows expansion in every direction. This meant inevitable rebellions, armies and wars to maintain control, so the Mali Empire wasn't exactly a peaceful paradise. Many of the wars have been forgotten, but the opulence, and architecture have lingered in the memory to produce a legacy any ruler would be proud of.

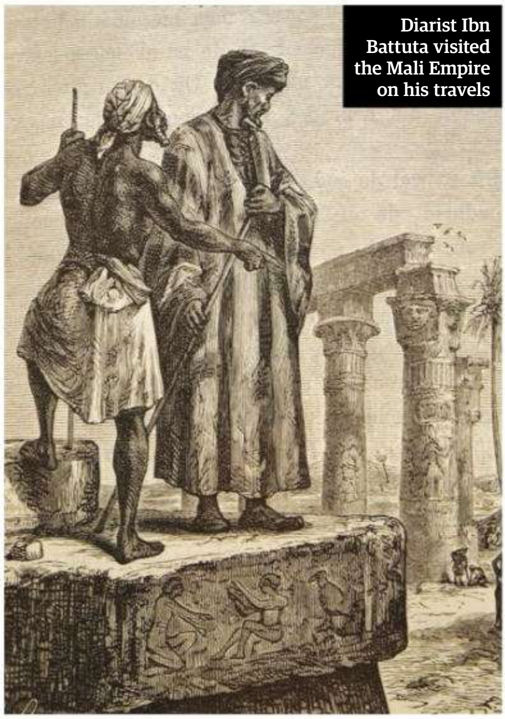
After a long reign ruling an empire at the height of its power, spending vast amounts of money to support the sciences, and financing the construction of innumerable religious and other buildings, no one knows how or when Mansa Musa died. There are no records, which is a strange omission.

We know more about his son and his reign than we do about the man who put Mali on the map. There are stories that he simply abdicated in favour of his son, and the fact that there are no reports of a palace coup or assassination strongly imply that Mansa Musa died peacefully in his bed. Whatever happened to this fabulously wealthy emperor in the last days of his life, no one disputes that Mansa Musa ruled for 25 years and that he was a great leader.

When the famous Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta arrived in the empire in the 1350s, about 20 years after the death of Mansa Musa, he was surprised by the affluence, the scholarship and the piety of Mali's people.

But the Mali Empire, like all empires, declined over time. However, contrary to natural assumptions, it wasn't European colonists that took advantage of its vulnerability, but a central West African empire known as the Bamana Empire. They superceded the mansas of Mali.

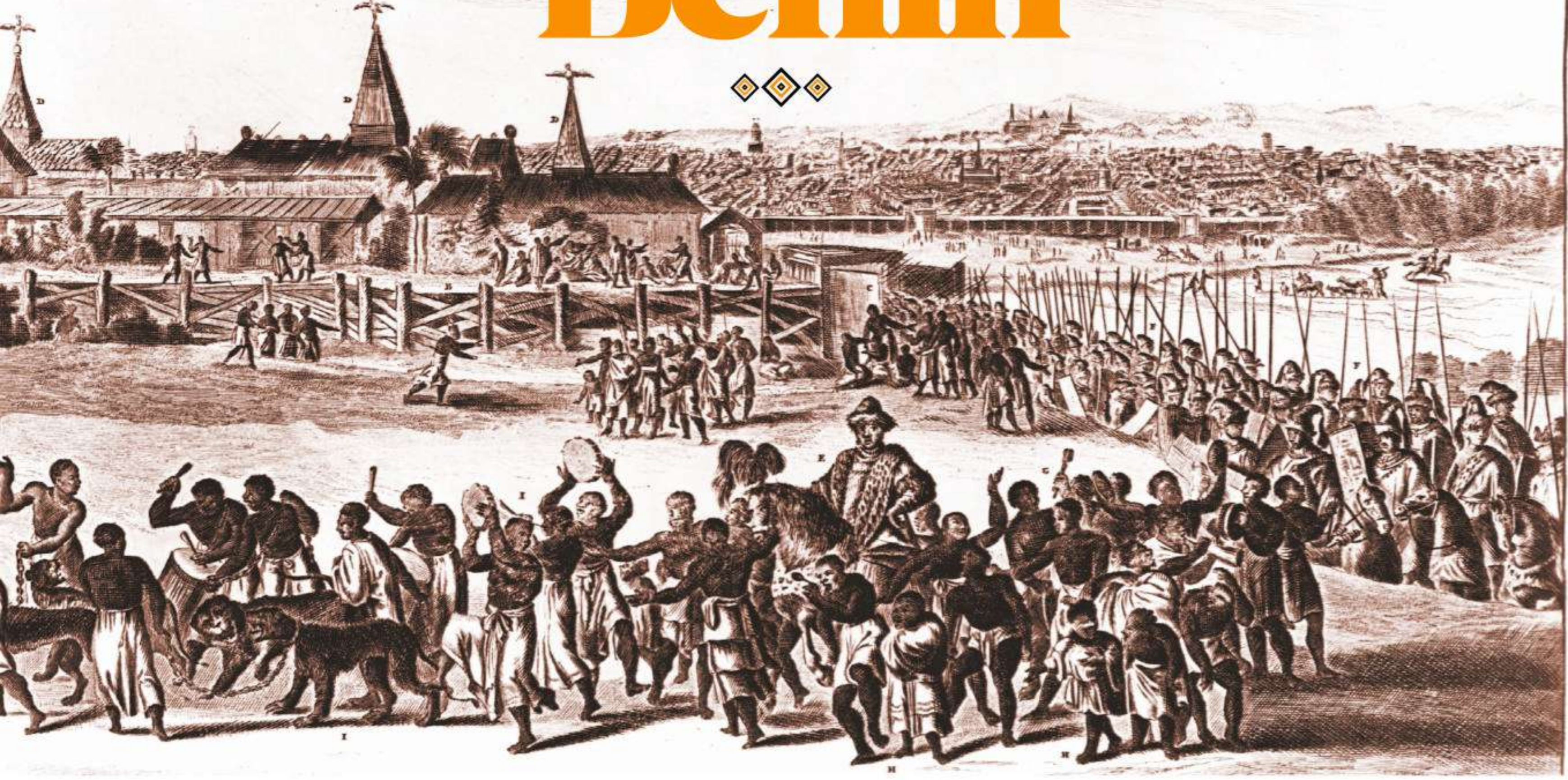
Though Mali may have faded into obscurity, the legacy of the fantastic Mansa and his vast wealth lives on. As we've said, the value of his riches is hard to quantify, but the best estimates put it at $2 trillion. So far no one has amassed more – not a mighty king or queen, or a titan of industry - meaning Mansa Musa is not only the richest person in history, but the richest person of all time.



Diarist Ibn Battuta visited the Mali Empire on his travels

© Nicholas Forder, Alamy, Getty Images

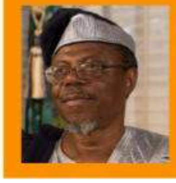
The Lost City of Benin



A royal procession in Benin City recorded by Dutch explorers in 1668

The capital of Africa's Benin Empire astonished Europeans with its beauty, so why is there nothing left?

WRITTEN BY TOYIN FALOLA

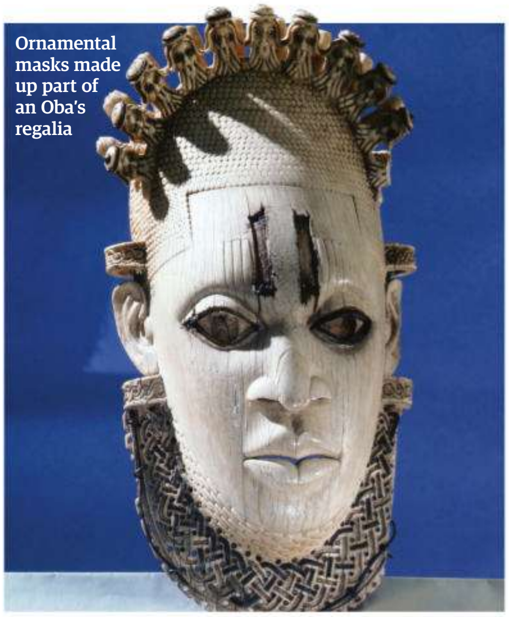


A Nigerian historian and professor of African Studies, Toyin Falola holds the Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Chair in the Humanities at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of *Key Events in African History: A Reference Guide.*

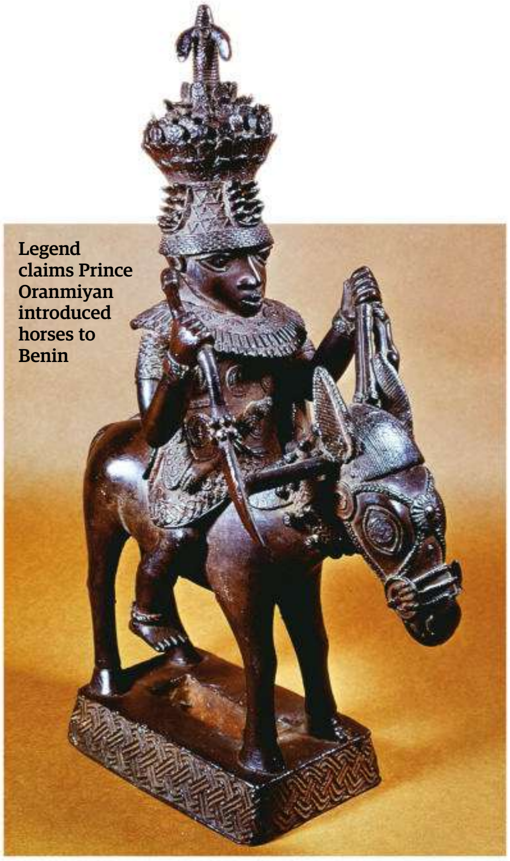
"Great Benin, where the king resides, is larger than Lisbon; all the streets run straight and as far as the eye can see," wrote Portuguese ship captain Lourenço Pinto in 1691. He added, "The houses are large, especially that of the king, which is richly decorated and has fine columns. The city is wealthy and industrious. It is so well governed that theft is unknown and the people live in such security that they have no doors to their houses."

Located in the depths of the jungle but connected to other African kingdoms and the Atlantic Ocean by the Niger River, Great Benin City was the imperial capital of an empire that, at its peak, stretched from Lagos in the west to beyond the Niger in the east – an area that equates to approximately one-fifth of modern-day Nigeria.

Benin made contact with Europeans in the 1480s when Portuguese traders happened upon it while seemingly trying to find a way around the traditional Sahara trade routes. Dutch merchants arrived 100 years later and, over next 200 years, more traders came from England, France, Germany and Spain. They all returned home with amazing stories to rival Pinto's but today, if you mentioned the Benin Empire to a Westerner – even someone from Portugal, which maintained regular contact with the kingdom for 400 years – they are likely to stare at you blankly. So what happened to the great city of Benin and why did it disappear without a trace?



Ornamental masks made up part of an Oba's regalia


Legend claims Prince Oranmiyan introduced horses to Benin

The beginnings of Benin

According to the oral history of the Edo people, Benin was originally called Igodomigodo, named after Igodo, founder of the Ogiso (meaning 'rulers of the sky') dynasty. Although Igodomigodo would go onto have around 31 Ogiso rulers who governed a formidable kingdom, the Benin Empire didn't begin in earnest until the 12th century.

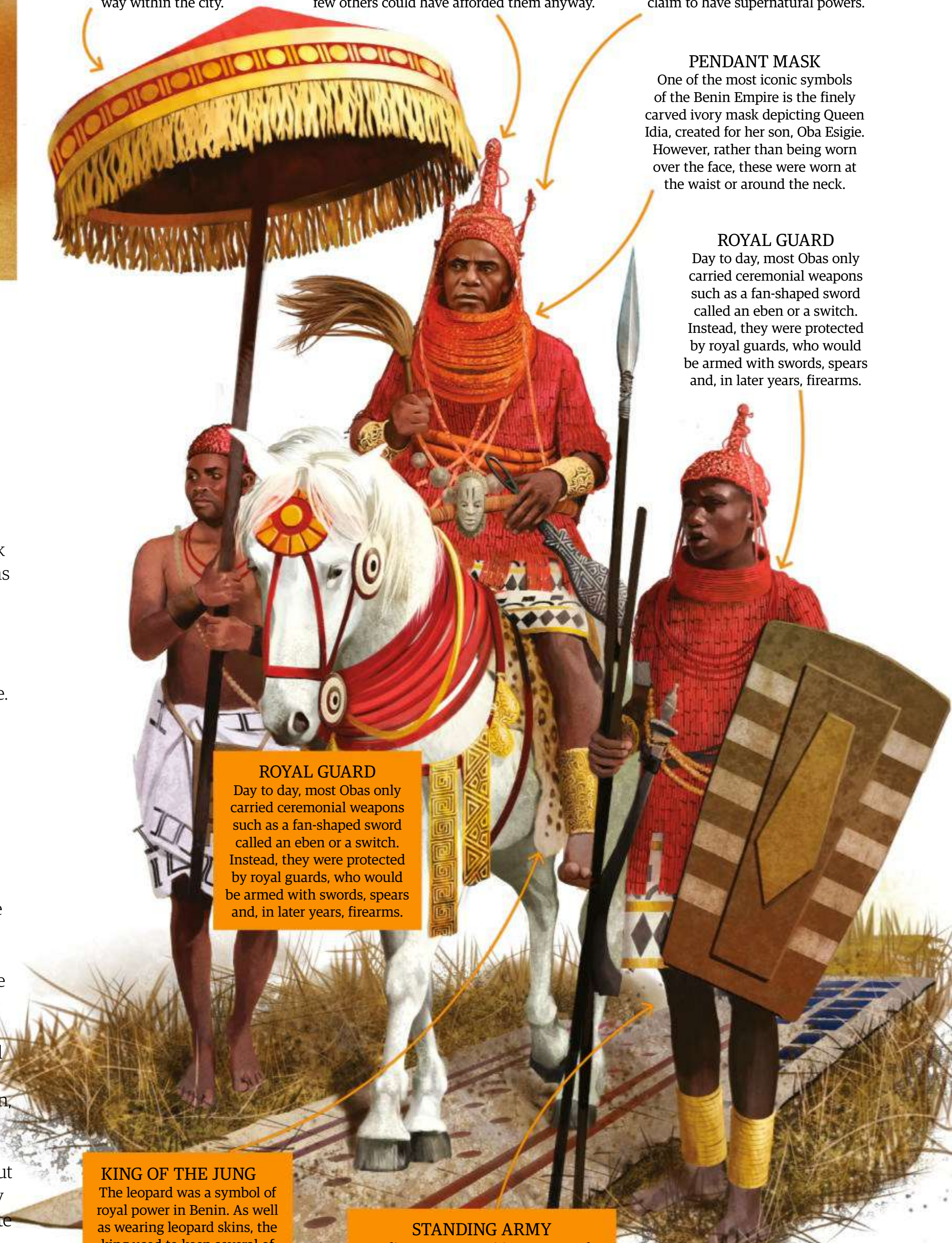
After years of political discord, Igodomigodo sent emissaries to the neighbouring kingdom of Ife to ask Oduduwa, the father of the Yoruba, for one of his sons to be their ruler. Oduduwa sent his son Oranmiyan and he became the first Oba, or king. He had a son, Eweka, but Oranmiyan found it hard to rule and he eventually renounced his position, saying that the politics of the people made his leadership intractable.

Oranmiyan called Igodomigodo "ile Ibinu", or land of anger, and left Eweka behind with palace guardians to instruct him in the art and mysteries of the Benin so he could govern his own people. Eweka's eventual reign started the Oba era. Oba Ewedo, who took over after Eweka's death in 1255, changed the name of the kingdom from Ile Ibinu to Ubini and it was later contact with the Portuguese that changed the name again to Bini, from which we get the name Benin.

With the Oba established, the social hierarchy of the Benin Empire began to take form. Apart from the king, the political elite consisted of the titled chiefs – the Uzama n'Ihinron – and the royal family. The Uzama were powerful, and their role in customs and royal administration was gnomic. There were also the palace chiefs who oversaw palace administration, and the town chiefs who carried out regular administrative work such as tribute collection and the conscription of soldiers. Other officials carried out various duties that ranged from hunting to astrology while there were also craftsmen who were like a caste – guilds of artists produced art for the king and his royal court.

THE ALL-MIGHTY OBA

Benin's political, military and religious leader was an autocratic king



SHELTERED LIFE
The Oba rarely appeared in public but when he did an attendant who would shelter him from the Sun. No one else was allowed to be shaded in this way within the city.

CORAL CROWN
The Oba wore a headdress and tunic woven of red coral beads. While only the king and his closest companions were allowed to wear the beads, they were so rare and valuable – traded from as far away as the Mediterranean – that few others could have afforded them anyway.

GOD-LIKE STATUS
As well as being the highest political authority, the Obas were the spiritual leader of his people. Religious cults would often develop around them and many would even claim to have supernatural powers.

PENDANT MASK
One of the most iconic symbols of the Benin Empire is the finely carved ivory mask depicting Queen Idia, created for her son, Oba Esigie. However, rather than being worn over the face, these were worn at the waist or around the neck.

ROYAL GUARD
Day to day, most Obas only carried ceremonial weapons such as a fan-shaped sword called an eben or a switch. Instead, they were protected by royal guards, who would be armed with swords, spears and, in later years, firearms.

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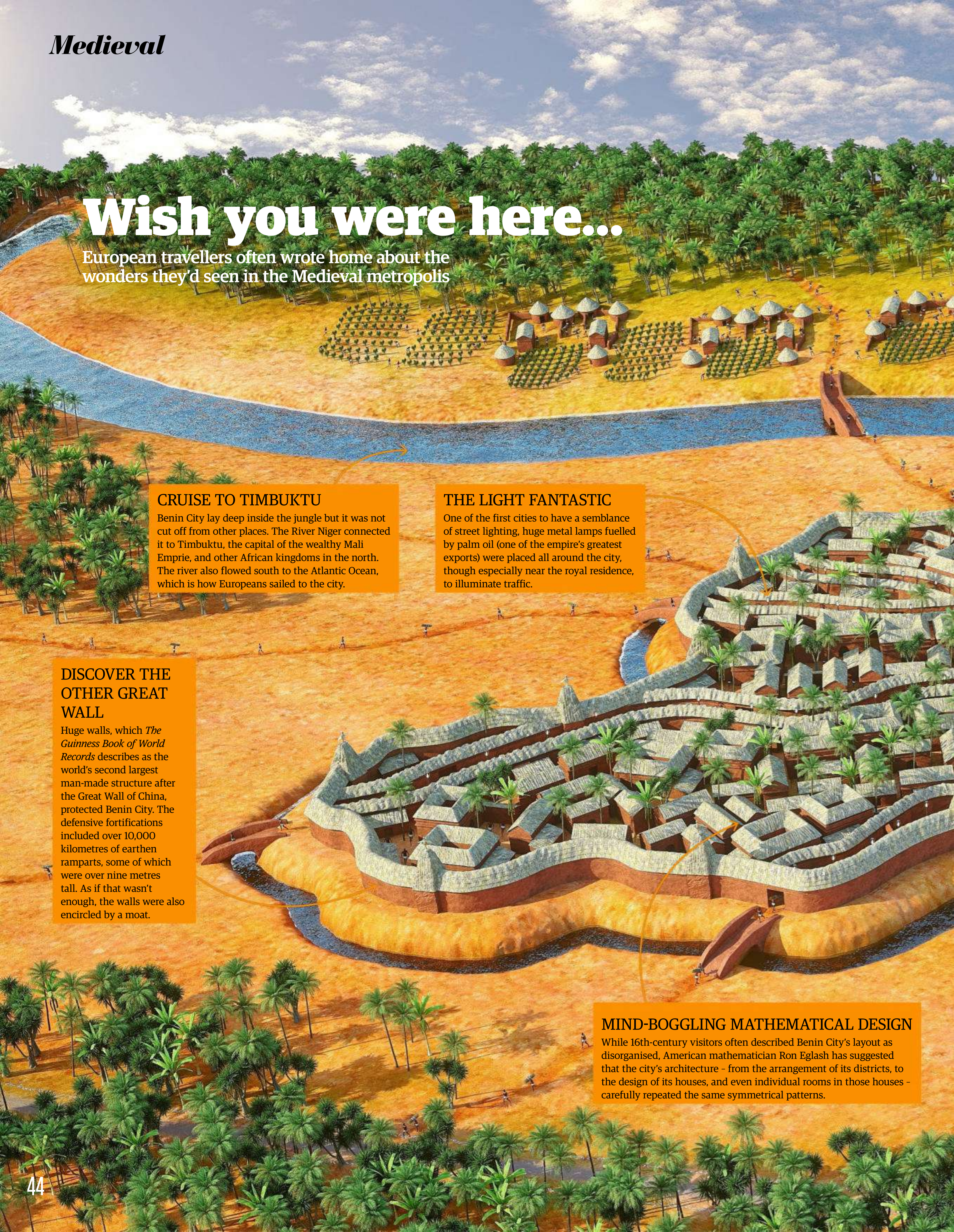
KING OF THE JUNG
The leopard was a symbol of royal power in Benin. As well as wearing leopard skins, the king used to keep several of the big cats as pets, which were paraded on important occasions like mascots.

STANDING ARMY
Ruling over many cities, towns and villages, Dutch sources claimed that the Oba could mobilise 20,000 soldiers in a day and raise an army of 80,000 to 180,000 soldiers.

Wish you were here...

European travellers often wrote home about the wonders they'd seen in the Medieval metropolis



CRUISE TO TIMBUKTU

Benin City lay deep inside the jungle but it was not cut off from other places. The River Niger connected it to Timbuktu, the capital of the wealthy Mali Emprie, and other African kingdoms in the north. The river also flowed south to the Atlantic Ocean, which is how Europeans sailed to the city.

THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

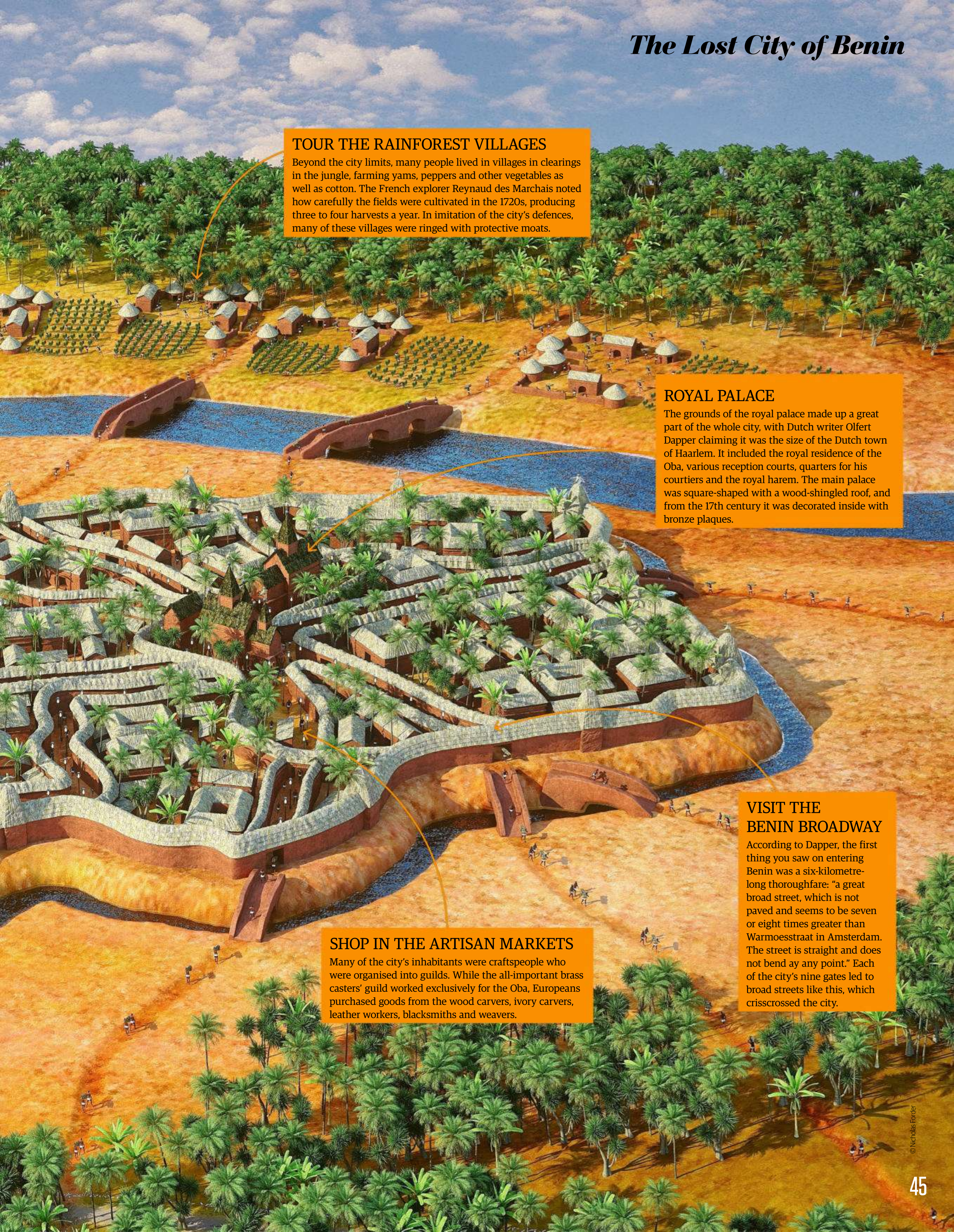
One of the first cities to have a semblance of street lighting, huge metal lamps fuelled by palm oil (one of the empire's greatest exports) were placed all around the city, though especially near the royal residence, to illuminate traffic.

DISCOVER THE OTHER GREAT WALL

Huge walls, which *The Guinness Book of World Records* describes as the world's second largest man-made structure after the Great Wall of China, protected Benin City. The defensive fortifications included over 10,000 kilometres of earthen ramparts, some of which were over nine metres tall. As if that wasn't enough, the walls were also encircled by a moat.

MIND-BOGGLING MATHEMATICAL DESIGN

While 16th-century visitors often described Benin City's layout as disorganised, American mathematician Ron Eglash has suggested that the city's architecture – from the arrangement of its districts, to the design of its houses, and even individual rooms in those houses – carefully repeated the same symmetrical patterns.



TOUR THE RAINFOREST VILLAGES

Beyond the city limits, many people lived in villages in clearings in the jungle, farming yams, peppers and other vegetables as well as cotton. The French explorer Reynaud des Marchais noted how carefully the fields were cultivated in the 1720s, producing three to four harvests a year. In imitation of the city's defences, many of these villages were ringed with protective moats.

ROYAL PALACE

The grounds of the royal palace made up a great part of the whole city, with Dutch writer Olfert Dapper claiming it was the size of the Dutch town of Haarlem. It included the royal residence of the Oba, various reception courts, quarters for his courtiers and the royal harem. The main palace was square-shaped with a wood-shingled roof, and from the 17th century it was decorated inside with bronze plaques.

VISIT THE BENIN BROADWAY

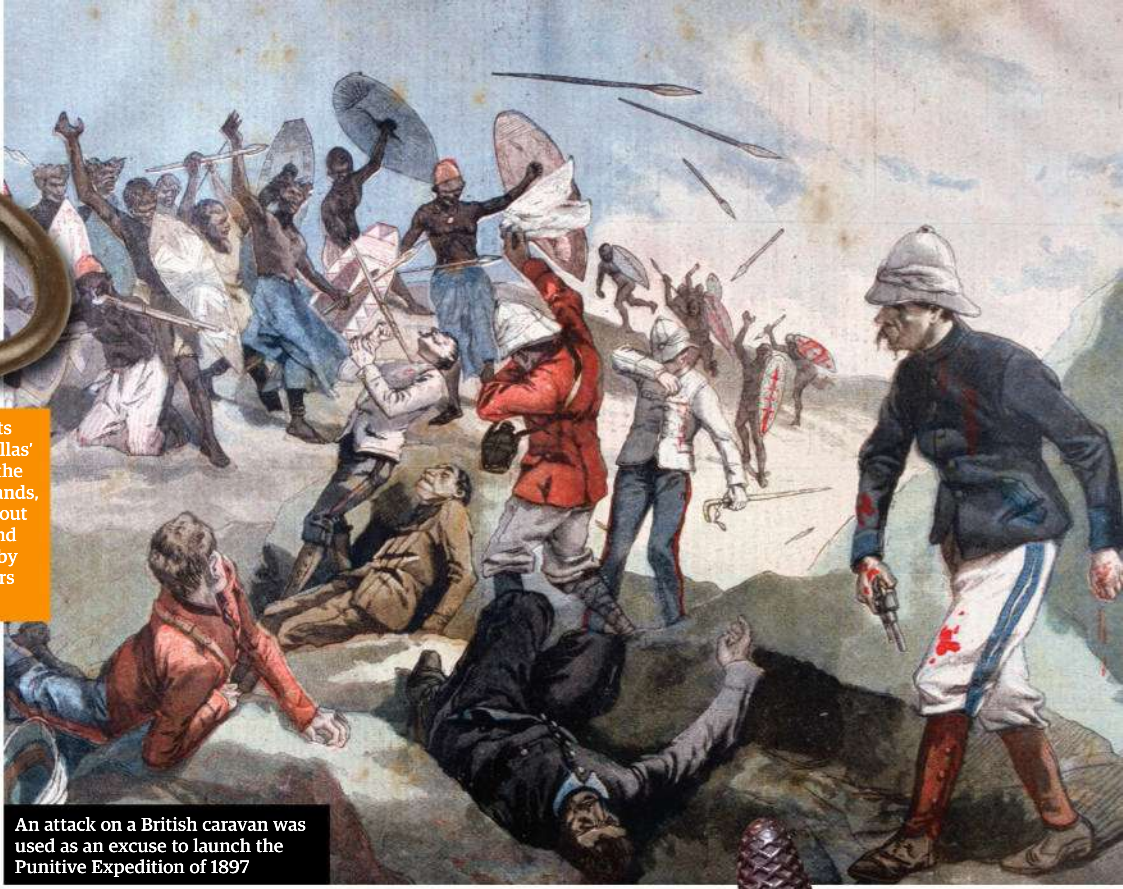
According to Dapper, the first thing you saw on entering Benin was a six-kilometre-long thoroughfare: "a great broad street, which is not paved and seems to be seven or eight times greater than Warmoesstraat in Amsterdam. The street is straight and does not bend ay any point." Each of the city's nine gates led to broad streets like this, which crisscrossed the city.

SHOP IN THE ARTISAN MARKETS

Many of the city's inhabitants were craftspeople who were organised into guilds. While the all-important brass casters' guild worked exclusively for the Oba, Europeans purchased goods from the wood carvers, ivory carvers, leather workers, blacksmiths and weavers.

© Nicholas Forder

Brass bracelets known as 'manillas' were made in the modern Netherlands, traded throughout West Africa and melted down by bronze workers in Benin



An attack on a British caravan was used as an excuse to launch the Punitive Expedition of 1897

Imperial golden age

Between the late 13th century and the 15th century, Benin's empire grew sporadically under the expansionist wars of conqueror kings. The fascination with and the formidability of the empire are built around various historical artefacts such as the impressive range of artworks, their advanced trading networks and the military strategies by which the warrior kings expanded and defended Benin. Benin had a large army of well-trained and disciplined soldiers, and the king was the supreme ruling authority over them.Oba Ewuare I, who reigned between about 1440 and 1473, is largely credited with the transformation of the kingdom into a modern state structure. He reorganised the political structures through reforms that minimised the uneasy relationship between the Oba and the chiefs, and it enabled him to monopolise military power with the latter factor being responsible for his imperialist expansion. He is also noted for promoting art and artefact production – namely the bronze casting, ivory and wood that Benin would be known for around the world.

The craftsmen produced a distinct style of art that included heads, figurines, brass plaques and other items of royal adornment. Artistry was used to celebrate royal omnipotence and to legitimise the king's power and glory. As the Oba was believed to embody the country and its continuity, art was used to communicate his divinity and possibly to also subjectify his people who rarely saw or had access him as he was believed to be a divine being.

Oba Ewuare was also associated with architectural innovation, city planning, grand festivals and the introduction of royal beads. He built on the efforts of Oba Oguola and completed the first and second moats, a network of ramparts that walled the city against external aggressors. The moat was an impressive part of national defence covering roughly 16,000 kilometres and enclosing 6,500 square kilometres of community land. It was built over the course of six centuries and it was a work of pre-mechanical engineering marvel.

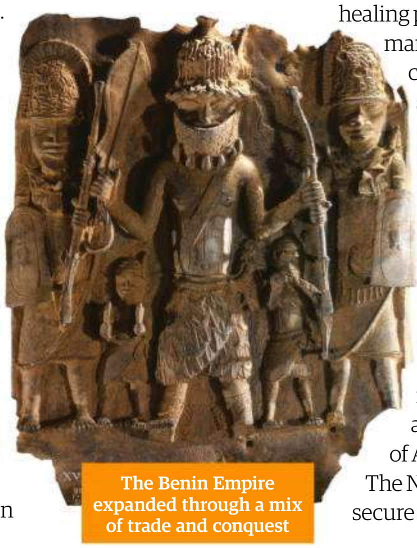
In 1974, The Guinness Book of World Records described the Benin Moat as the largest earthwork in the world prior to mechanical inventions and it is considered to be the largest man-made invention, second only to the Great Wall of China. Oba Oguola was also believed to be the one who first sent his craftsman, Igueghae, to Ife to learn the art of bronze casting.

Iconic art

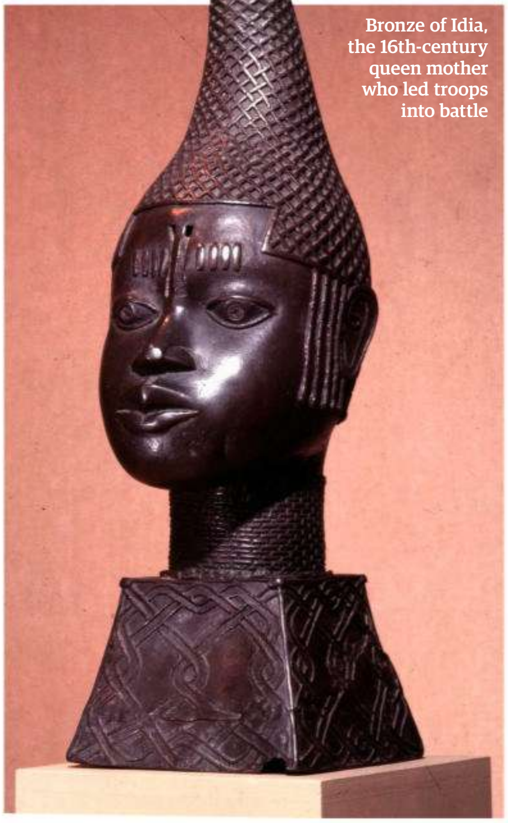
Of the many artworks from the Benin Empire, two of them are iconic: The Bronze Head of Queen Idia and the Benin ivory mask. The Bronze Head is a dedicatory piece in honour of Queen Idia, the mother of Oba Esigie, the king who reigned in the early 16th century. Queen Idia was the first Iyoba, or Queen Mother, and she played a hugely significant role in his kingship.

As Iyoba, Idia was a titled chief in her own right and she had a district, Iyekuselu, where she presided. She could raise the levies necessary to fund the army she oversaw. Although women were typically banned from certain professions – the army included – she went to war and recorded numerous victories. She was described as both possessing military acumen and sorcery with which she helped her son Esigie to defeat his brother Arhuanran, a contender for the throne.

As she was the king's mother, the Iyoba already commanded prestige. But Idia revolutionised the position, allowing future Iyobas to wield actual political power. The position demanded, among other qualities, the holder to possess metaphysical power to help her son overcome other contenders to the throne. Queen Idia was said to have magical healing powers, and was depicted in many sculptures and art works commissioned in her honour, such as the Benin ivory mask. This was a small-scale ivory sculpture, made in honour of Idia. The mask was worn as a pendant by Esigie.Today, the mask is a stark reminder of the unsavoury circumstances in which artworks left the shores of Africa. The mask was chosen as an emblem of FESTAC '77, a festival that took place in Nigeria and drew people from every part of Africa to celebrate black culture. The Nigerian government tried to secure the mask on a loan from the British Museum, which refused claiming that it was too fragile to transport. The Museum also requested a hefty $3 million as an indemnity. A sign that things might be improving, last year the British Museum held talks to discuss the return of the Benin Bronzes.



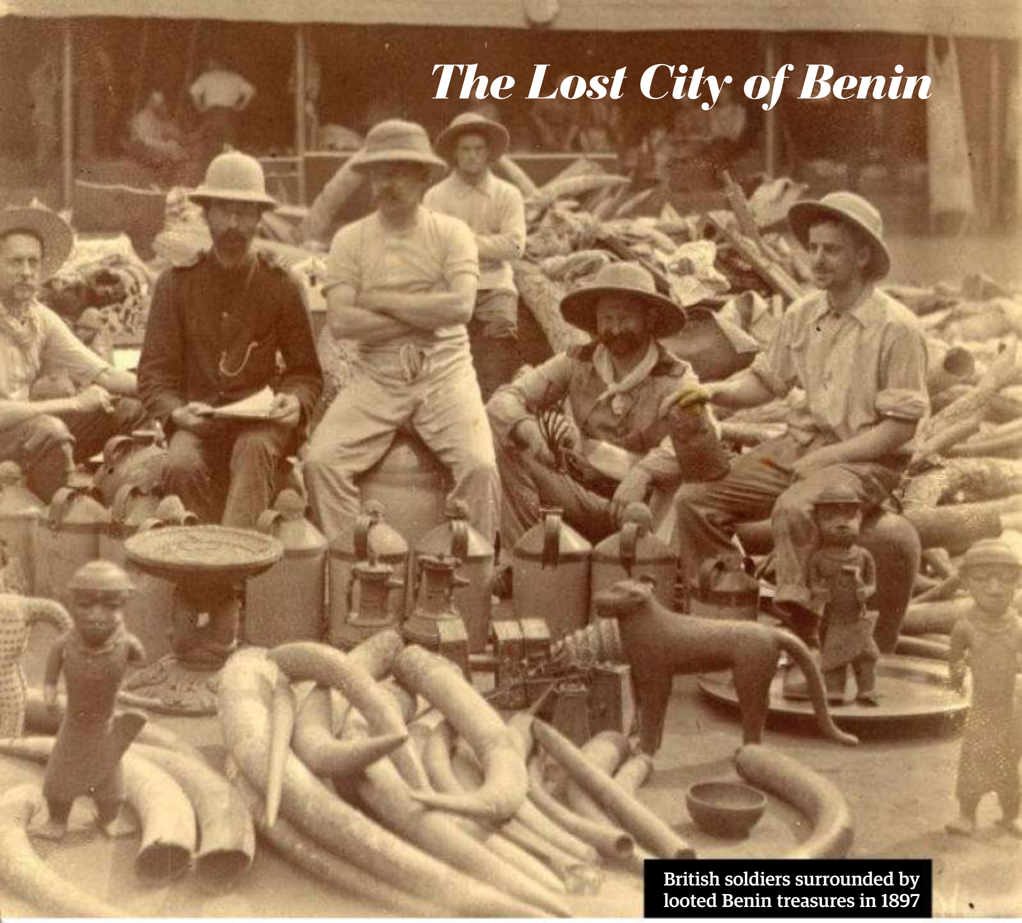
The Benin Empire expanded through a mix of trade and conquest



Bronze of Idia, the 16th-century queen mother who led troops into battle

Bloodthirsty demise

Portuguese explorers made contact with Benin in the 15th century and they quickly started trading. The relationship between Portugal and Benin was so cordial that Oba Esigie was said to have sent ambassadors to Portugal, an exchange



British soldiers surrounded by looted Benin treasures in 1897

that resulted in European influences on Benin's art. Esigie was reputed to have been literate in Portuguese and this boosted his interaction with the Portuguese traders. Meanwhile, the initial Portuguese missionary effort yielded some fruits as some churches sprang up in Benin. Trade continued between Portugal and Benin, with items including ivory, pepper and a limited supply of slaves.

During this period, there wasn't really a major drive for a slave trade, because it was mainly women were sold into serfdom in Benin. Those who were enslaved – either because they were captured in war or forced to pay off their debts with hard labour – were arguably held more for the royal court's prestige than actual economic proceeds. Trade in slavery was therefore marginal, as enslaved men were more useful to boost Benin's military might than as a means of exchange. Besides, Benin was enjoying such an economical and military high that they didn't need the proceeds from the Atlantic slave trade. It's also worth noting that Benin's relationship with the Europeans went beyond trading goods to warfare and mercenary services.

But by the 17th century, the kingdom had begun to decline as a result of a lack of leadership, internal fractures and indiscipline among members of the ruling class. When the slave trade was abolished and the price of ivory fell, it hit Benin hard. In the mid-18th century, the empire got a boost under Oba Eresonyen but it was not to last. The kingdom was starting to shrink as former territories began to move away from the old empire to towards the British both for trade and protection.

An ivory saltcellar showing European traders and their ship from 17th-century Benin

Exiled Oba Ovonramwen and his wives Queen Egbe (left) and Queen Aighobahi (right) in Calabar

> **"She was described as both possessing a military acumen and sorcery"**

◆

In the mid-19th century, Benin began to trade in palm oil and as the product became more important to the British, they sought to make Benin a protectorate. The Oba took refuge in isolationism and since Benin's political power had declined, the king took to making human sacrifices to reignite his sacral authority. In 1892, vice-consul HL Gallwey pushed Oba Ovoramwen to sign his now diminished empire to the British as a protectorate. There was some doubt about whether the Oba indeed signed the treaty as he was unsure if the British had good intentions. By making Benin a British protectorate, the treaty would have facilitated commerce, ceased slave trading and ended human sacrifice.

Benin eventually fell during the punitive expedition of 1897. The Oba sensed that the British intended to depose him so his chiefs, against his knowledge, ordered a pre-emptive attack on a caravan carrying unarmed British officers. Two of the officials managed to escape but that incident sealed Oba Ovoramwen's fate. Realising that his kingdom would be invaded, he ramped up the rate of human sacrifices to appease his ancestors.

The news of the Oba's increasing bloodthirstiness, coupled with the deaths of the British officials, became a justification for the invasion of 1897 and Britain summoned its forces to descend on Benin. The Oba, his chiefs and their followers fled, although they came back and eventually surrendered. The Oba apparently approached the British with the pomp and pageantry of his position but he was humiliated and deposed. He was eventually sent to exile in Calabar, in the southeastern region of Nigeria, where he died in 1914.

Setting out to destroy what remained, the British set Benin on fire – but they moved the royal treasures to a safe place first. They sold some of the priceless artefacts in Lagos and transferred others to Europe, where they made their ways into private collections and museums. The sales were meant to cover the cost of the expeditions. In 1914, the throne was restored to Eweka II, Ovoramwen's son, although under the supervision of the British colonial officers. What was left of Benin was nothing but a shadow of its former glory and today no signs remain of its mighty walls or moats.

Benin's looted cultural heritage is making its way home, however. In November 2022, the Horniman Museum in London signed its Benin Bronzes back to Nigeria. Other institutions including the Church of England, Jesus College Cambridge,, the Smithsonian in Washington DC and a slew of museums across Germany have all repatriated Benin Bronzes from their collections to their rightful African home.

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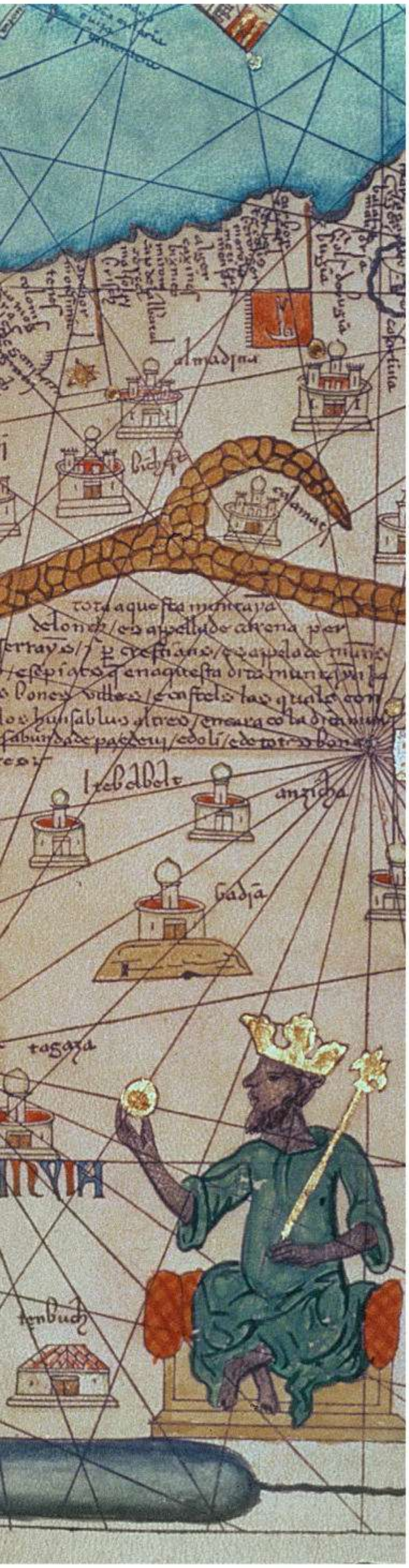
cordoua
granada
rabat
fes
maroch
tacorom
GOZOLA
sudam
ciutat de melli



From Equals to Enslaved

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Toby Green discusses his Wolfson History Prize-nominated book *A Fistful Of Shells* and the way in which resource-rich West Africa was depleted by trade and slavery

Written by Jonathan Gordon

It was German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel who once claimed that the continent of Africa was "no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit". This dismissal of the contribution of this entire region to the history of the globe is patently ridiculous, and yet for many the history of this continent is largely a blank space in time.

In his Wolfson History Prize-nominated book, *A Fistful Of Shells*, Toby Green focuses on the history of West Africa in the same way that so many historians might have previously written about the history of Western Europe. His broad investigation into the economic and social changes that took place from the before the Atlantic slave trade to the age of revolution delves back in time to reveal truths about the rich and diverse nature of events in this region.

As we learn from Green, this particular region of Africa was standing toe-to-toe with Europe as it entered the 16th century.

"I think it's no exaggeration to say that certainly Mali, for example, was richer and better globally connected than most places in Europe at that time," he tells us. Mansa Musa, sultan of the Mali Empire during the 14th century, has been estimated to have been the richest man who ever lived, which goes some way to supporting the notion of West Africa's wealth and status. "The gold that was mined in different parts of West Africa, like the Gold Coast but also Senegambia, was the gold that financed the expansion of coinage in North Africa. The name, for example, of gold coins in Spain in the 16th century, the maravedi, derived from al-Murabitun, which was a gold coin in Western Sahara. So this was the source of gold. Its rulers were, according to some estimates, the richest people who have ever lived, and they were connected to places like China, Iraq and so on, which European states weren't."

So how did these two massive geographic and economic regions begin to diverge? This is one of the key questions that Green's book investigates. "European trade in Africa starting in the late-15th century has traditionally been depicted in historical writing as Europeans turning up with baubles and getting what they wanted, and it wasn't like that," he says. What they were trading in was currency, which in West Africa in this time took a number of different forms, including cowries, a small shell from which Green's book takes its title. "Cowries were one of the major currencies in West Africa from the 13-14th centuries, right through to the late-19th century and the end of the pre-colonial period," he says. "Cowries were initially brought

EXPERT BIO | DR TOBY GREEN

Dr Toby Green is a historian who received his PhD from the Centre of West African Studies at Birmingham University. He was the recipient of the British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award in 2015 and is currently senior lecturer in Lusophone African History and Culture at King's College London.

WEST AFRICA BEFORE SLAVERY

The major powers that stood toe-to-toe with Europe

Ghana Empire
Dates: c.500-c.1200
Area at largest known point: 1,600 km2

Thanks in part to the introduction of the camel into the western Sahara, which had enhanced trade routes throughout the region, the Ghana Empire, or more properly known as Wagadou, grew rich from gold and salt and expanded.

Mali Empire
Dates: c.1230-1670
Area at largest known point: 1,294,994 km2

Also known as the Manden Kurufaba, the Mali Empire is most famous for its incredible wealth, but it also played a massive role in shaping the legal, linguistic and cultural landscape of West Africa at the time.

Songhai Empire
Dates: c.1000-1592
Area at largest known point: 1,400,000 km2

One of the largest states in African history, the Songhai Empire was born out of the city of Gao and was part of the Mali Empire. However, as that power declined Gao surpassed it, swallowing up much of its territory in the process.

in through the caravan trade from along the Silk Road and then down across the Sahara.” They were also a very practical currency, as Green explains: “They were a useful form of currency because you could assess them by weight, but they were also very small, so you could use them for minor transactions, which you couldn’t necessarily do with gold, which is too valuable.”

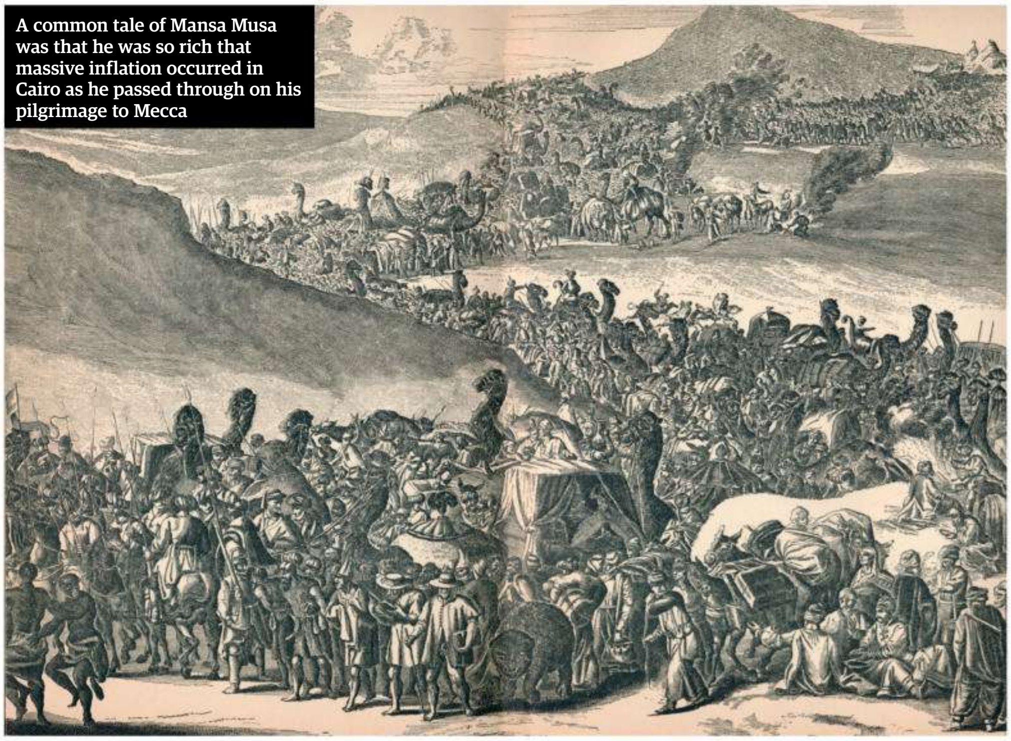
This is the first step of the disparity opening up between the continents. “The African markets were also being flooded with new currencies. One of the big differences is that if you bring in currency and there isn’t an increase in manufactured goods and trading with it, that tends to lead to inflation. That’s what classic economic theory tells us. That increase of manufactured goods being transported into and out of Europe from China and India was happening in Europe, but it wasn’t happening to the same degree in Africa. The trade was in currencies, and that essentially began to create inflation in African currencies.”

And then came the transatlantic slave trade, which feeds even more into this cycle. “A lot of this trade and the currencies that were coming in were part of the slave trade. What was happening was that while the value of African currencies was declining, through the process I’ve just described, the major exports, which were gold and captive human beings, were themselves producing value outside of Africa.”

> “Gold coins in Spain in the 16th century, the maravedi, derived from al-Murabitun, which was a gold coin in Western Sahara”

So on the currency side the relative value of gold was rising, giving European traders more spending power, while simultaneously enslaved people were being used as a labour force, generating more value or what economically we would call a surplus. “So while the currencies within Africa were declining in value, its exports were producing value outside of the continent which exacerbated this process,” explains Green.

It’s easy to see how the cycle of decline might continue from there and it was made even worse by the new element of slavery that the transatlantic trade introduced: that being enslavement could be a heritable state. “Here’s where the term or the concept of slavery has led to a lot of confusion because we have one concept that actually covers a huge range of relationships between human beings,” says Green. Slavery as it had existed in West Africa


A common tale of Mansa Musa was that he was so rich that massive inflation occurred in Cairo as he passed through on his pilgrimage to Mecca

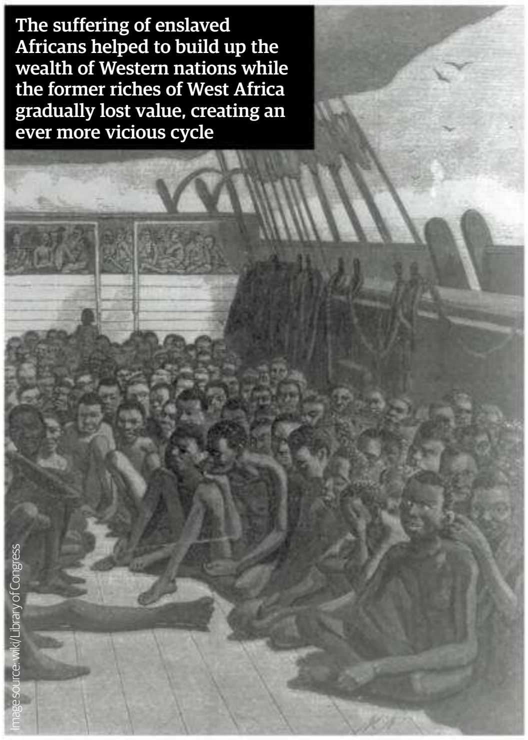

The suffering of enslaved Africans helped to build up the wealth of Western nations while the former riches of West Africa gradually lost value, creating an ever more vicious cycle

Image source: wiki/Library of Congress

A shrine in Kaba Kangaba, the former capital of the Malinke kingdom that went on to form part of the Mali Empire

Cowries continued to have significance, such as being an important element in Afro-Cuban religion

3x © Getty Images

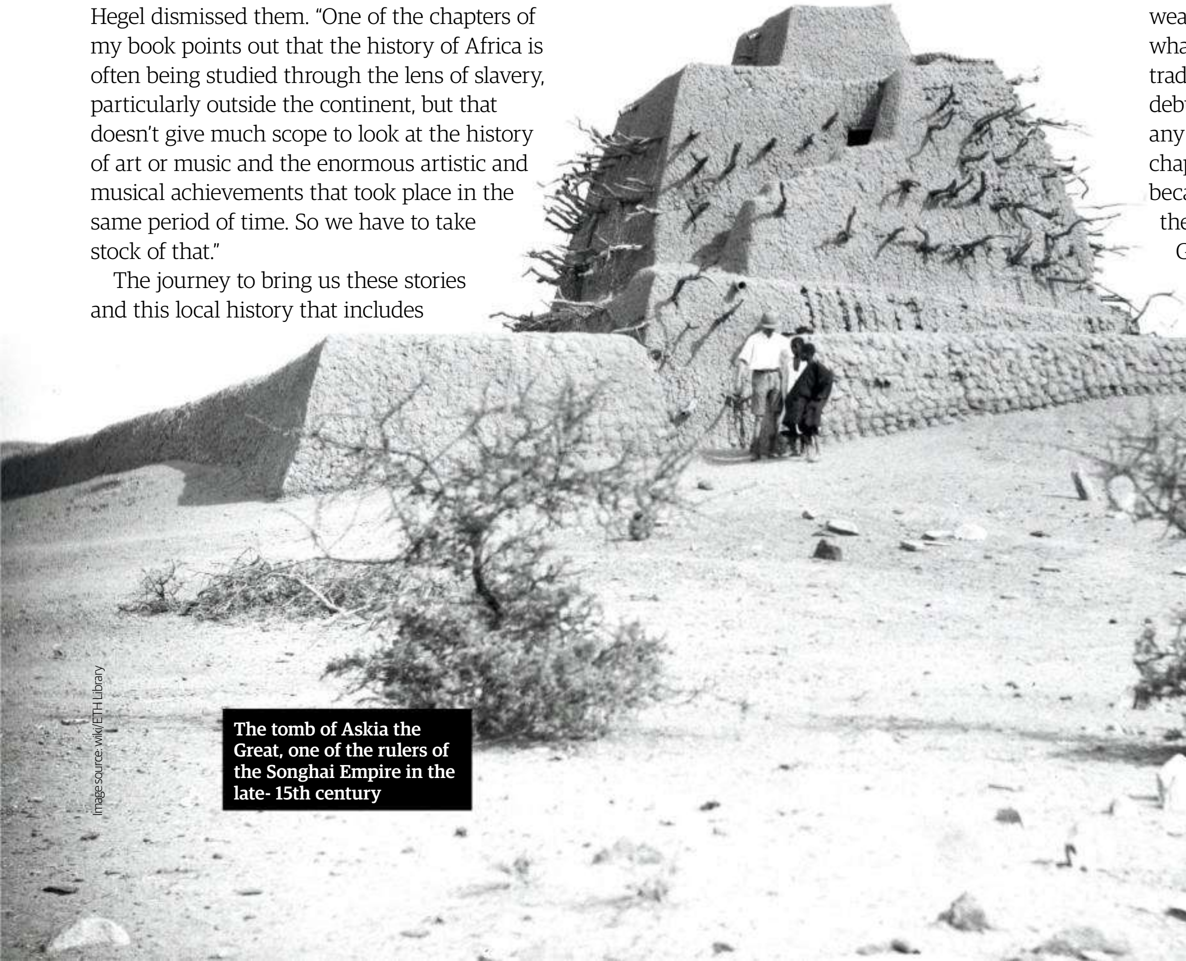
previously had been mostly about outsiders to the community being incorporated into society. According to Green: "They might be war captives, they might be migrants, but the key thing was they had no kinship relationships. It was by making kinship relationships over a couple of generations that those people might become incorporated into a community." The trade that enslaved African men and women and forced them to work in the fields and mines of the New World now introduced the concept that the children of these enslaved people would themselves be born into bondage with no clear means of emancipation.

But as Green points out, a singular concentration on slavery can be a disservice to West African history where advancements and human ingenuity continued to be expressed, even if figures like Hegel dismissed them. "One of the chapters of my book points out that the history of Africa is often being studied through the lens of slavery, particularly outside the continent, but that doesn't give much scope to look at the history of art or music and the enormous artistic and musical achievements that took place in the same period of time. So we have to take stock of that."

The journey to bring us these stories and this local history that includes but also goes beyond the transatlantic slave trade proved to be a challenging one for Green. "It was a bit of an odyssey, to be honest, putting together this book. Unlike a lot of historical topics, the materials for West African history in the pre-colonial period are not all gathered in one place or one or two places. They're scattered around the world. And in a way that's a testament to elements of African history. I used archives in different European countries, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, as well as Britain, but also in Latin America, in Brazil, Peru, Chile and Colombia."

But these Western records are only one part of the story. "If you were to just use these written sources, you would come away with the idea that the most important or the only really important issues in African history were slavery, trade and African-European relations," explains Green. "But in West Africa you get a very different view of what matters in history. In fact, a lot of history in most parts of West Africa (not all parts, but most parts) is an oral genre. And in that oral record the Atlantic slave trade appears very little, and if you were to just use those sources you would come away thinking well, the important things in African history are histories of kingship, religion, migration and family relationships. The reality is that all of this is important, but you need both perspectives to try and produce something that reflects the balance of that history."

In this way *A Fistful Of Shells* looks to both tackle the issues of slavery and the triangular trade that gradually stripped West Africa of its enormous wealth and power, as well as look deeper into what continued to happen in the region after the trade. Through both approaches we can begin to debunk the notion of Africa as a continent without any history. "I think you just have to look at any chapter of the book to have this idea overturned, because it's clear that African societies transform themselves in many different ways," explains Green. "Once you look at any aspect of this in detail, you see how completely false that view is, but also how insidious it actually is."

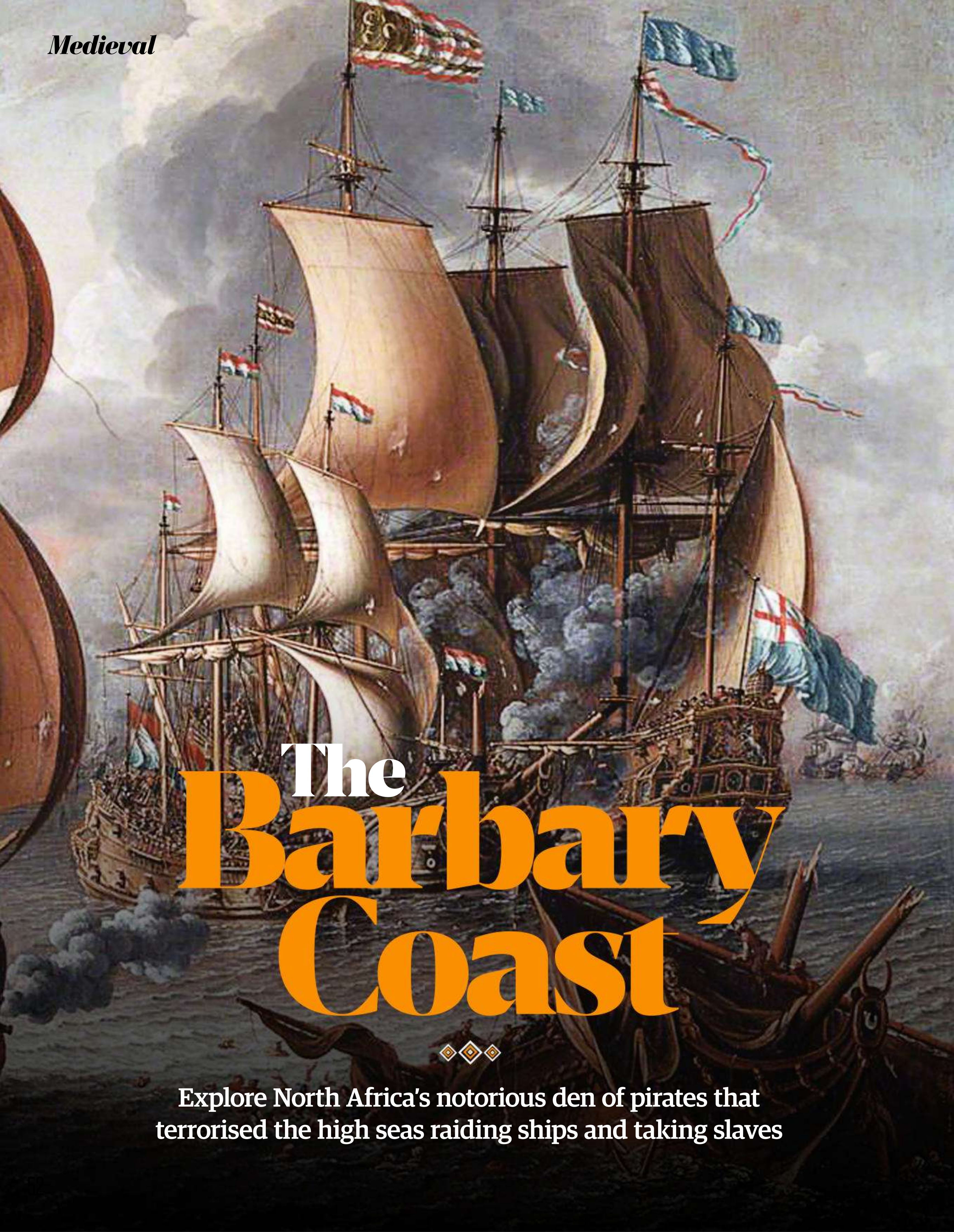


The tomb of Askia the Great, one of the rulers of the Songhai Empire in the late- 15th century

Image source: wiki/ETH Library

Toby Green
A Fistful of Shells
West Africa from the rise of the slave trade to the age of revolution

***A Fistful Of Shells* by Toby Green** is available now from Allen Lane and was nominated for the 2020 Wolfson History Prize.



The Barbary Coast

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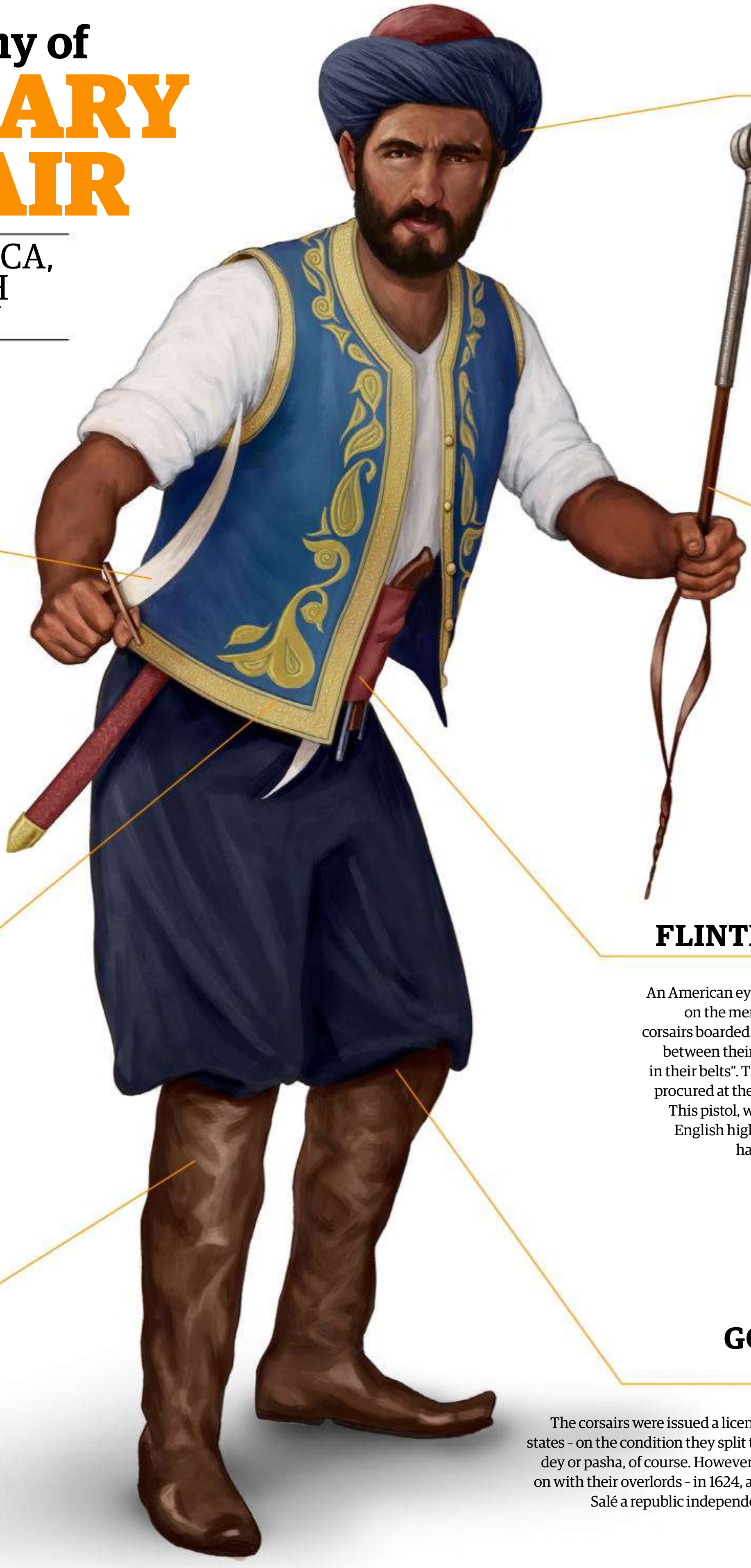
Explore North Africa's notorious den of pirates that terrorised the high seas raiding ships and taking slaves

The Anatomy of A BARBARY CORSAIR

NORTH AFRICA, 15TH-19TH CENTURY



TURBAN

MARK OF DISTINCTION

The corsairs wore turbans not only as a symbol of their religion, but also as a mark of distinction from the Christians. In particular, European renegades wore white turbans that indicated they were Muslim converts.

CURVED SWORD

CUTTING DOWN THE ENEMY

The most popular sword used by the Barbary corsairs was a type of scimitar called a kilij – a short sword with an acutely curved, single-edged blade. Its flared tip was called a yalman and significantly added to the sword's cutting power. The kilij also had a distinct T-shaped cross-section to the back of the blade, which added to the weapon's stiffness without adding unwanted weight.

FLANGED MACE

A BLOODY BUSINESS

Risking their lives every day, Barbary corsairs could never have too many weapons. In addition to a sword and pistol, popular choices included daggers, axes and even a flanged mace, which was a type of bludgeon that was particularly useful against armoured enemies.

HIDDEN ARMOUR

JUST IN CASE

Depending on their rank or perhaps how cautious they were, a corsair might also have worn protective armour. This would have most likely been a composite of mail with small plates covering the torso, which was frequently worn either under or sandwiched between layers of fabric.

FLINTLOCK PISTOL

TAKE THE SHOT

An American eyewitness of an Algerian attack on the merchant ship described how the corsairs boarded the ship with "sabers grasped between their teeth and their loaded pistols in their belts". This was most likely a flintlock, procured at the bustling markets of Tangiers. This pistol, which was also associated with English highwaymen, proved particularly handy when it came to boarding and taking over ships.

OTTOMAN DRESS

TRADITIONAL CLOTHING

The corsairs had no formal uniform but would have worn the everyday apparel of the Maghreb, such as a collarless vest or jacket, possibly with baggy salvar trousers. Due to the nature of their work, they would have likely tucked a weapon in their kusak sash and worn sturdy basmark boots rather than Ottoman slippers.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE

LICENSED TO STEAL

The corsairs were issued a license to plunder from the coastal states – on the condition they split their profits with the local bey, dey or pasha, of course. However, the corsairs didn't always get on with their overlords – in 1624, a group of captains proclaimed Salé a republic independent of the Moroccan sultanate.

© Kevin McGivern

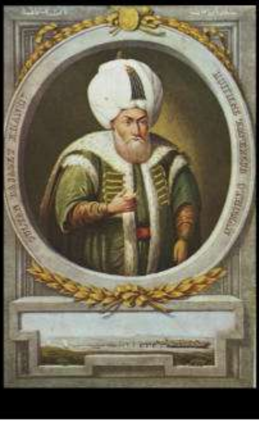
Rise and fall of the Barbary Coast

Discover how the corsairs came to rule the waves – but only with the support of the Ottoman Empire

1487

RALLY AGAINST THE RECONQUISTA

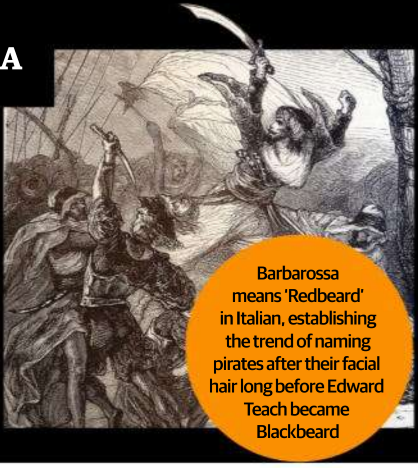
Ottoman sultan Bayezid II encourages Kemal Reis and other privateers to establish themselves in the Barbary ports, so they can support the Iberian Moors being forced out by Christian forces.



1504

BARBAROSSA BEGINS

Oruç Barbarossa captures two papal warships off the coast of Tuscany, establishing the Barbary pirates as a serious threat and shocking Christendom.



Barbarossa means 'Redbeard' in Italian, establishing the trend of naming pirates after their facial hair long before Edward Teach became Blackbeard

1650

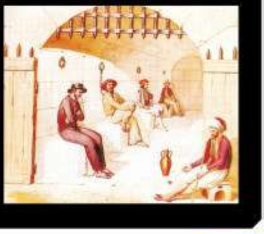
THE SLAVE'S LOT

1 MILLION Europeans are enslaved by Barbary pirates between 1530 and 1780

The number of captives converting to Islam between 1580 and 1680 **15,000**

2 black loaves are given to each slave to eat each day

1 change of clothes is given to each slave every each year



1625

WESTERN EUROPE ATTACKED

Partly due to the coastal populations of the Mediterranean being greatly depleted and the rise of the 'Salé Rovers' on the Atlantic, England, Ireland and even Iceland are targeted by Barbary slave hunters.

1609

THE EXPULSION OF THE MORISCOS

Philip III decrees the thousands of descendants of the Iberian Moors are banished from Spain. Many settle in the Moroccan port of Salé and turn to privateering to get their revenge.

1604

'TURNING TURK

After making peace with the Spanish, James I of England bans privateering, prompting many English sailors to turn to outright piracy operating out of the Barbary ports.

1655

ENGLAND STRIKES BACK

Oliver Cromwell's 'General at Sea' Robert Blake is sent to the Mediterranean to get compensation from the Barbary states. When Tunis refuses, Blake destroys their squadron off the coast of Porto Farina.

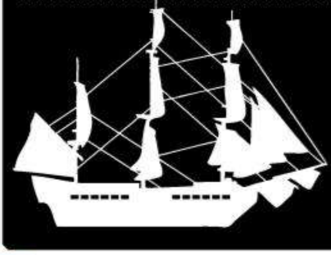
The British fleet fired over 50,000 rounds and 960 explosive mortars at Tunis in just 11 hours

1786

US PAYS PROTECTION

130 US seaman are captured by Barbary pirates

The amount the United States pays to Morocco and Algiers to 'protect' merchant ships and free prisoners between 1786 and 1794 is **$1.25 MILLION**



36 guns are on a warship 'gifted' to Algiers to delay payments in 1796

1801

BARBARY WARS

Unwilling to pay further tributes, President Thomas Jefferson sends the US Navy to wage a 14-year war against Tunis, Algiers and Tripoli, which ultimately secures fair passage for American vessels.

CAPTURE OF ALGIERS

Oruç and his brother Hayreddin liberate Algiers from Spain, killing the local ruler Sālim al-Tūmī for conspiring with the foreign power. Oruç rules Algiers until his death in 1518.

1516

MAN THE BARRICADES

85 Genoese towers are built in Corsica between 1530 and 1620 to defend against pirates

Miguel de Cervantes, famed author of *Don Quixote*, was kidnapped in 1527 and kept as a slave in Algiers for five years

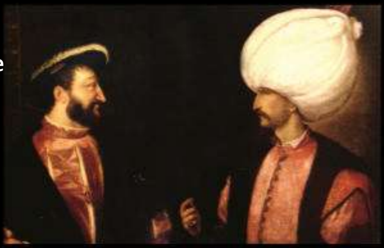
1530

2-6 guards watch each tower

18 METRES Typical height of watchtowers

FRANCO-OTTOMAN ALLIANCE

King Francis I allies with Suleiman the Magnificent against Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. As well as raiding Italian and Spanish coasts in support of his cause, Hayreddin Barbarossa helps the French recapture Nice in 1543 and winters in Toulon.



1536

RENEGADE PIRATES

A list of 35 privateer captains operating out of the Algiers in 1580s shows how varied their nationalities are.

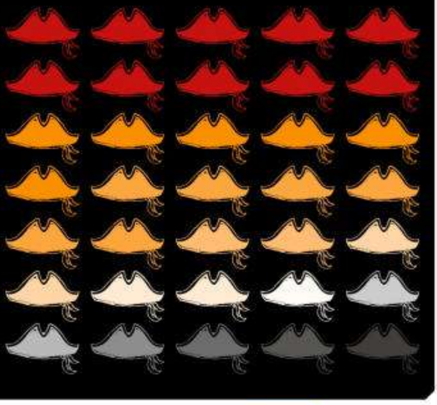
10 TURKS

6 GENOESE

3 Greeks, Sons of Christian renegades

2 Venetians, Spaniards, Albanians

1 Sicilian, Calabrian, Jewish, Neapolitan, French, Hungarian, Corsican



1580

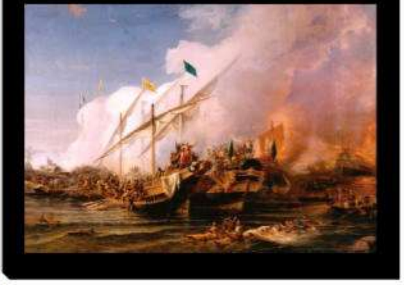
TAKING BACK TUNIS

Uluj Ali and Sinan Pasha successfully recapture Tunis from the Spanish. Spain abandon all other attempts to conquer North Africa and called for a truce with the Ottomans in 1580.

1574

BATTLE OF PREVEZA

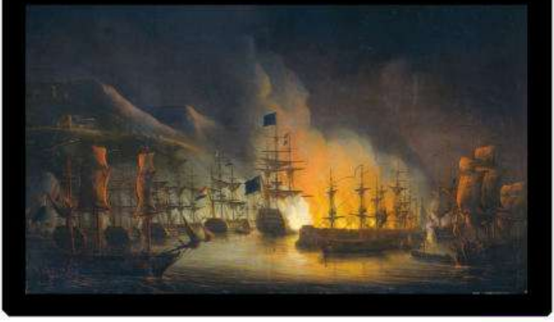
Despite being heavily outgunned, Hayreddin defends Ottoman-occupied Actium from the combined forces of Venice, Spain, Portugal, the Papal States and the Knights of Malta assembled by Pope Paul III.



1538

BOMBARDMENT OF ALGIERS

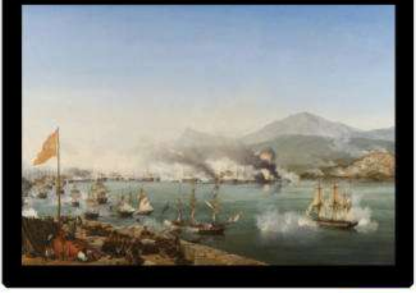
An Anglo-Dutch fleet lays siege to Algiers until the Algerian leader signs a treaty agreeing to no longer enslave Europeans. 1,200 slaves are freed but the corsairs remain a menace.



27 August 1816

BATTLE OF NAVARINO

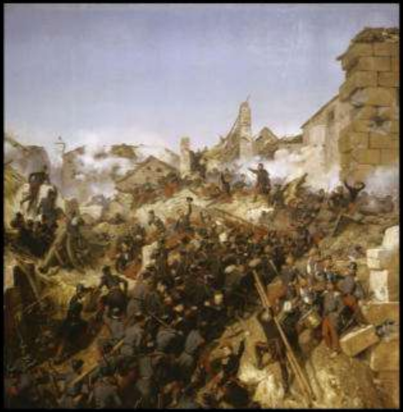
The Ottoman Navy is crushed by the combined power of British, French and Russian fleets that are defending Greece during its war of independence from the Turkish empire.



1827

ALGIERS CONQUERED

France invades Algiers before formally annexing it, ending 313 years of Ottoman rule in the territory. Slavery continues in the Ottoman Empire until 1890 but declines on the Barbary Coast.

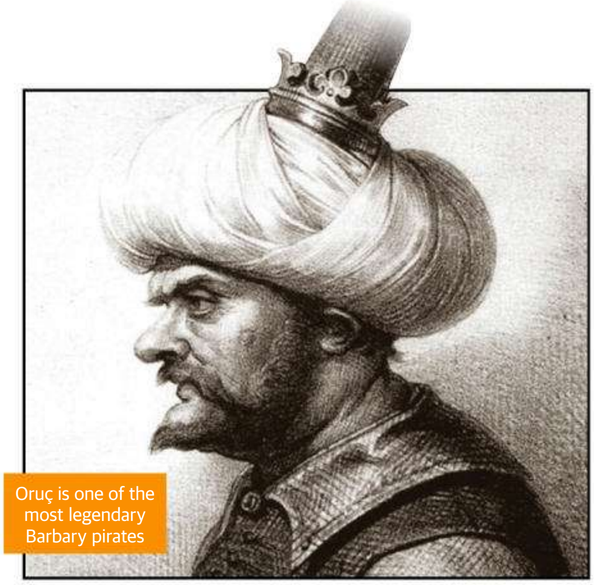


1830

Hall of Fame

PIRATE KINGS AND QUEENS

The notorious corsairs who ruled the Barbary Coast's seas



Oruç is one of the most legendary Barbary pirates

ORUÇ BARBAROSSA

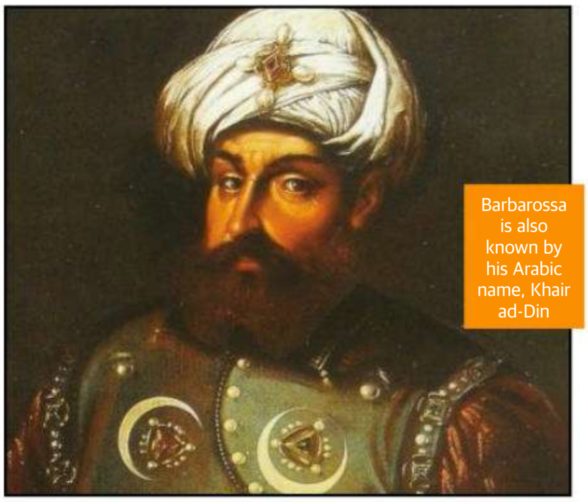
OTTOMAN C.1474-1518

Along with his younger brother Hayreddin, Oruç is one of the founding fathers of the Barbary Coast. They captured the city of Algiers in 1516, executed its ruler, Selim bei Tumi, and expelled the Spanish. While the brothers received support from the Ottomans, after becoming the new governor of Algiers, Oruç was determined to remain independent of the empire. The following year, he destroyed a Spanish fleet of 7,000 soldiers but failed to capture the Spanish tributary cities in North Africa. He was killed at the hands of the Spanish in 1518 while fighting them at the city of Tlemcen.

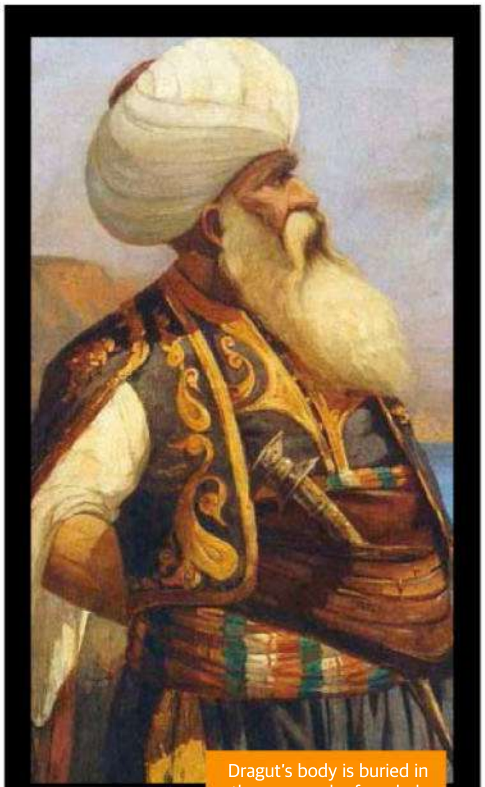
HAYREDDIN BARBAROSSA

OTTOMAN C.1478-1546

Renowned as a military genius, Hayreddin became the governor of Algiers following the death of his brother. Unlike Oruç, who sought some independence from the Ottomans, Hayreddin forged a stronger relationship with the sultanate in return for men and equipment. With this support, he built a powerful fleet to fight against Christian Europe, conducting a series of raids along the Mediterranean coast. Some of Hayreddin's most famous naval victories include the capture of El Peñón, a Spanish fortress, in 1529 and the conquest of Tunis in 1534, which he achieved while leading the Ottoman fleet of Suleiman the Magnificent.



Barbarossa is also known by his Arabic name, Khair ad-Din

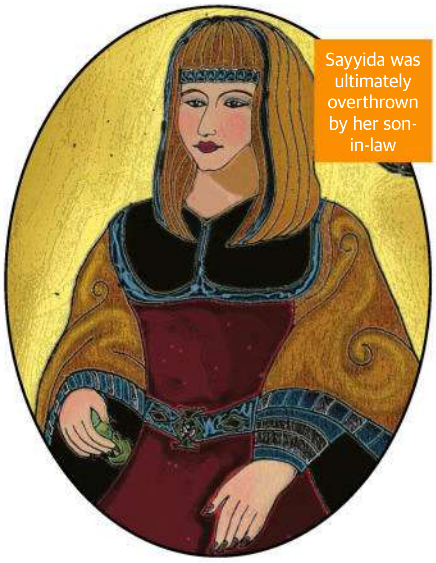


Dragut's body is buried in the mosque he founded

DRAGUT

OTTOMAN 1485-1565

A skilled sailor, Dragut joined Hayreddin Barbarossa's fleet and quickly became his right-hand man. As chief lieutenant, he took part in a number of raids and successfully captured a series of coastal fortresses. After Barbarossa's death, Dragut succeeded him as the leader of the Ottoman fleet and as the governor of Algiers two years later. A force to be reckoned with, he secured an array of naval victories, particularly the seizure of Tripoli – here he built the Dragut Mosque, which is still used today. He died during the failed Siege of Malta, wounded by splinters caused by a cannonball.



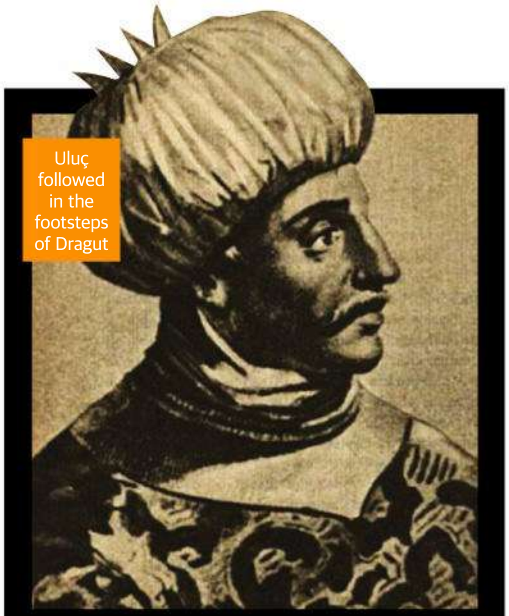
Sayyida was ultimately overthrown by her son-in-law

SAYYIDA AL-HURRA

MOROCCAN 1485-1561

Nobody had more reason to despise the Spanish than the pirate queen of the Barbary Coast, Sayyida al-Hurra. Originally from Granada, Sayyida and her family were forced to flee following the Reconquista in 1492. She married the governor of Tétouan, a family friend, and through him assumed a position of power. After his death, Sayyida inherited the position of governor and allied with Oruç Barbarossa to attack the Spanish and Portuguese – together they controlled the Mediterranean Sea. Sayyida remarried to the sultan of Morocco, Ahmed al-Wattasi, but famously refused to travel to Fez to marry him, instead insisting he come to her.

> Sayyida was last woman in Islamic history to legitimately hold the title of 'al-Hurra', or queen



Uluç followed in the footsteps of Dragut

ULUÇ ALI REIS

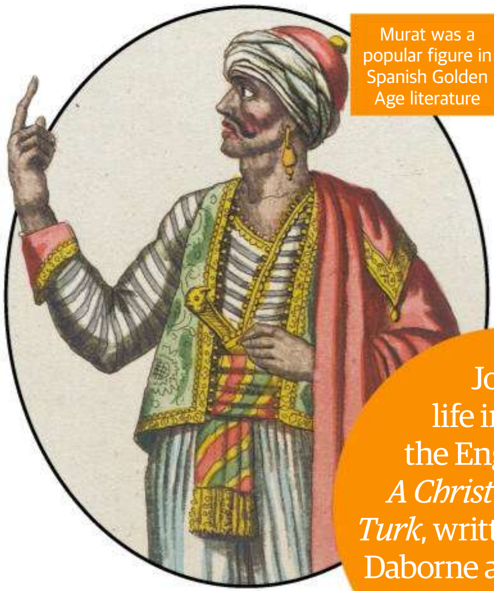
SPANISH C.1519-87

Uluç started his piracy career as a galley slave, captured by the Barbary pirates of Hayreddin Barbarossa. He converted to Islam and joined Dragut's fleet, taking part in a number of naval battles. Present at the Siege of Malta, Uluç succeeded Dragut as the governor of Tripoli after the latter's death and proved to be a capable commander. He became governor of Algiers in 1568 and three years later he was named the Grand Admiral of the Ottoman fleet.

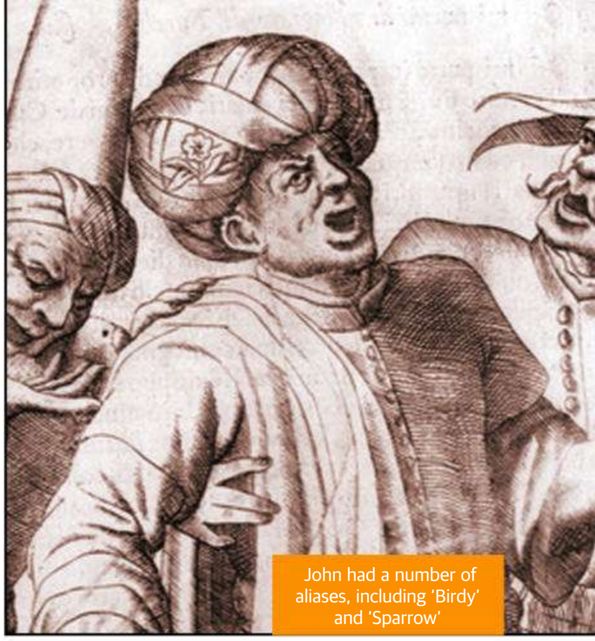
MURAT REIS THE ELDER

ALBANIAN 1534-1609

Murat Reis was one of the greatest captains of the Ottoman Navy. Having played a role in the fleets of Hayreddin Barbarossa and Dragut, he made a name for himself after he captured two treasure-filled papal galleys along the shores of Tuscany in 1580. Five years later, he led the first expedition by Barbary pirates into the Atlantic Ocean, where he successfully seized some of the Canary Islands – and he achieved the same again in 1587.



Murat was a popular figure in Spanish Golden Age literature

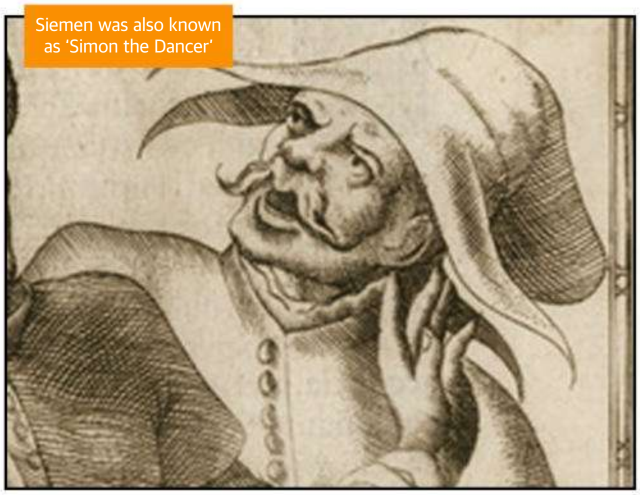


John had a number of aliases, including 'Birdy' and 'Sparrow'

JOHN WARD **ENGLISH C.1553-1622**

Captain John Ward was one of the most notorious pirates to have ever lived. Originally a fisherman, he became a privateer for Queen Elizabeth I, raiding Spanish ships. Losing his privateer's license after the accession of King James I, John briefly returned to the fishing industry before he turning to a life of piracy. Acquiring a ship with his men, many of whom were English or Dutch, he set up a base in Tunis and proceeded to capture and plunder merchant ships. He eventually converted from Christianity to Islam, adopting the name 'Yusuf Raïs', and he eventually enjoyed a wealthy retirement.

> John's life inspired the English play *A Christian Turned Turk*, written by Robert Daborne and based on his conversion to Islam.



Siemen was also known as 'Simon the Dancer'

SIEMEN DANZIGER

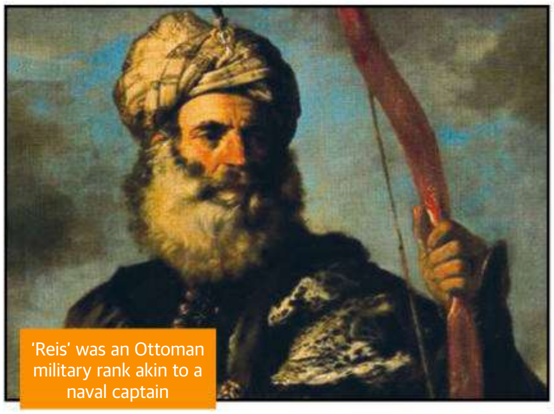
DUTCH C.1579-C.1615

A Dutch privateer like Murat Reis the Younger, Siemen also chose the life of a Barbary pirate. His motives remain a mystery but he quickly became one of the most famous renegades to join the Barbary Coast, notably forming a partnership with John Ward. He eventually abandoned piracy and settled in Marseilles, France, where he helped the French work against his former comrades. He is said to have been captured in Tunis and beheaded.

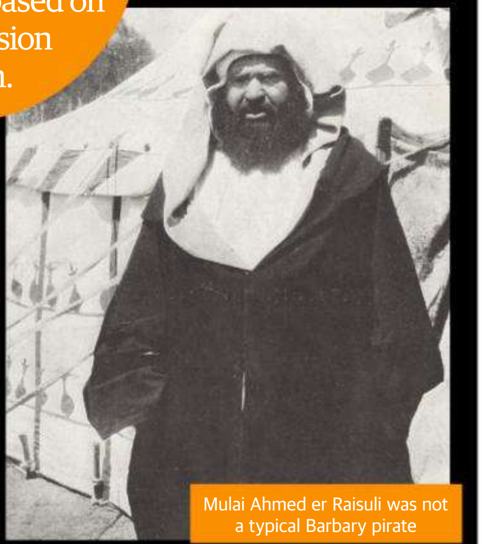
MURAT REIS THE YOUNGER

DUTCH C.1570-C.1641

Born Jan Janszoon van Haarlem, Murat was a Dutch privateer from Haarlem who led his ship to the North African coast, settling in Salé, Morocco. While still bearing the Dutch flag, he began attacking other ships, namely those belonging to the Spanish. Murat became a slave after he was captured by the Barbary pirates, during which time he converted to Islam. Becoming a Barbary pirate himself, he plundered vessels across the Mediterranean and lived a wealthy life.



'Reis' was an Ottoman military rank akin to a naval captain



Mulai Ahmed er Raisuli was not a typical Barbary pirate

MULAI AHMED ER RAISUNI

MOROCCAN 1871-1925

Despite the fact that piracy along the Barbary Coast ended during the 19th century, Mulai Ahemed er Raisuni is often referred to as 'the last corsair'. Embracing banditry, he was both loved and feared in Morocco as he opposed the government and the sultan. He conducted a series of kidnappings, including the abduction Walter Harris, a correspondent for *The Times* newspaper, and maintained a fleet of boats for piracy activities at sea.

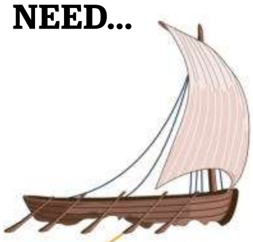
How to RAID A SHIP

BARBARY BATTLE TACTICS TO MAKE YOUR FORTUNE MEDITERRANEAN, 15TH-19TH CENTURY

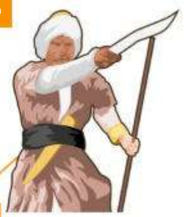
Barbary pirates were principally slave hunters and their aim was to kidnap people they could sell into the Ottoman slave trade. This gave them two targets: the coastline of Christian countries and unsuspecting ships.

But as the 16th century wore on, coastal towns around the Mediterranean became less populated as villagers moved inland or highly fortified their homes to better defend themselves. This sent some pirates further afield, raiding Britain, Ireland and even Iceland. However, most privateers focused on raiding vessels at sea, where scarcity of victims was less of a problem as shipping continued to be big business.

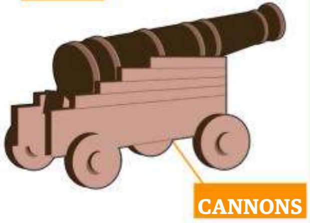
WHAT YOU'LL NEED...



GALIOT

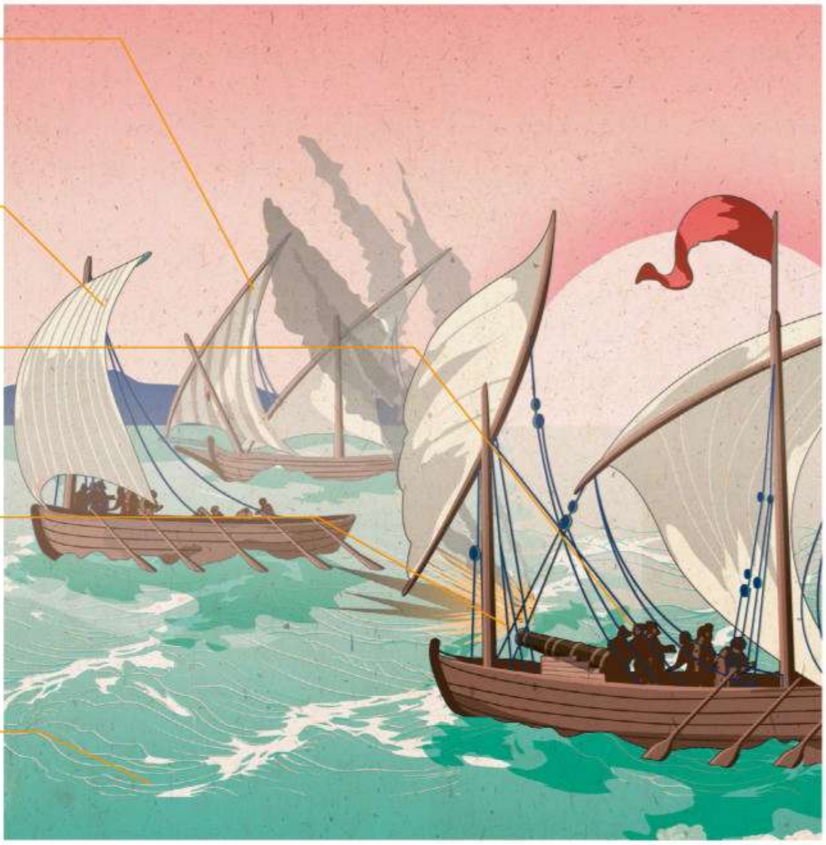


CREW



CANNONS

SHACKLES



Easy targets

While the corsairs preferred to target merchant ships with large crews and lots of booty on board, they were not above grabbing lone fishermen.

Fighting for freedom

Many attacked ships surrendered quickly but some fought back, hoping that the pirates would go in search of easier prey.

Mixed crew

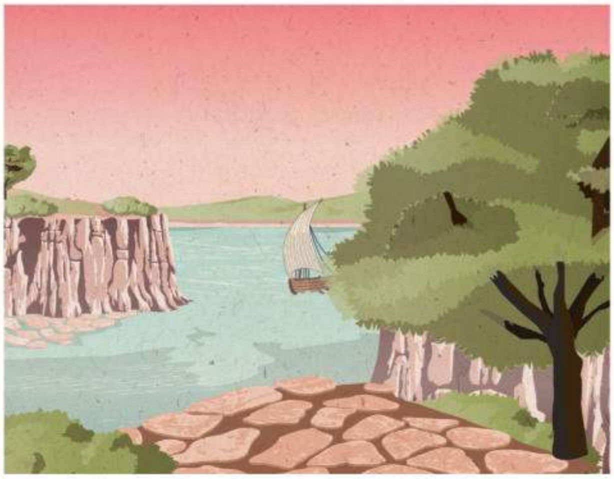
A Barbary ship would be staffed by a combination of experienced seamen, janissaries supplied from a sultan's own army and slaves to pull the oars.

Fire power

Galiots offered a speed advantage over lumbering merchant ships but they could only carry limited cannon power. Fortunately, janissaries came armed with muskets that worked just as well when fighting in close quarters.

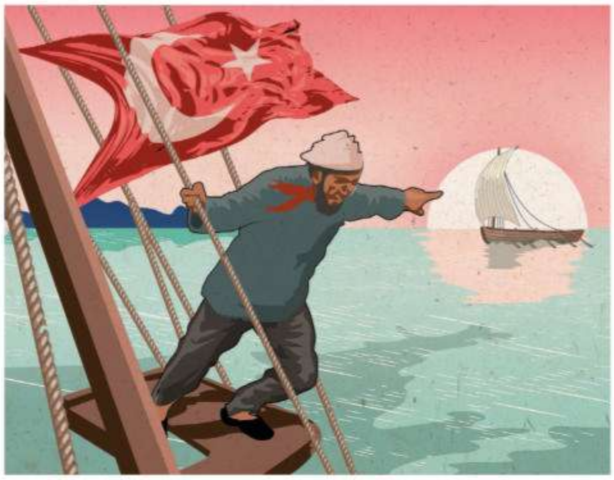
Seasonal work

During the winter months the Mediterranean is prone to storms, so Barbary corsairs only operated from mid-spring to late autumn, usually making their first sorties in April.



01 HEAD TO THE HUNTING GROUNDS

The best place to find a merchant ship is on a trade route between the Mediterranean's bustling ports. However, rather than target a vessel in open water, find a bottleneck where it can't easily escape, such as the Strait of Messina. Tuck your galiot behind a headland so you can ambush the ship.



02 KEEP A LOOKOUT

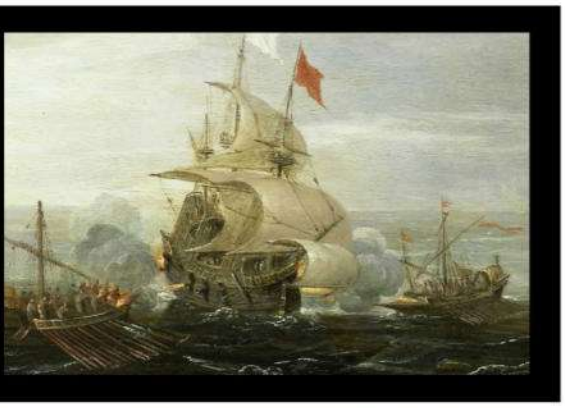
Once you're in position, you just need to wait for a potential victim to appear. This could be done by either by posting a lookout to watch the horizon from the masthead or else from the high ground of an island lair. In 1504, when the Barborossa brothers captured two papal galleys, they posted lookouts on the island of Elba.

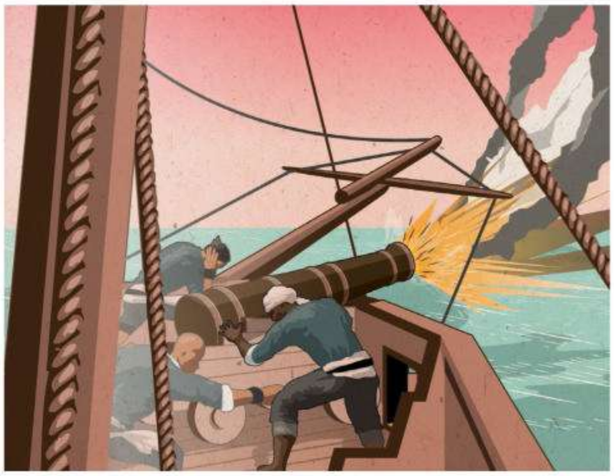
How not to... hunt as a lone wolf

It was only when they were summoned to join an Ottoman fleet for a specific campaign that larger numbers of Barbary vessels worked together - they preferred to work alone or in small squadrons. This was mostly a case of logistics as larger crews needed more food and water.

Oared ships also had to put in somewhere safe at night. The Mediterranean coast offered numerous bays where streams or springs could be found but most inlets couldn't conceal a large group and it took a dangerously long time to fill all the barrels from a single water source.

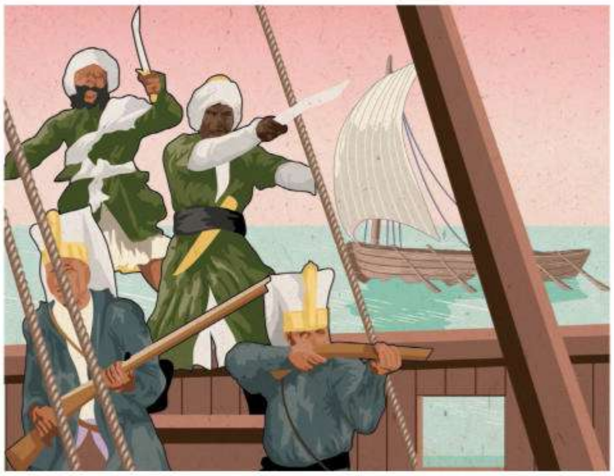
The same was true of provisions - while the crew of a single galiot could put in somewhere and kill a few goats, this was not an option for a larger force. This limited how far the pirates could range and therefore their opportunities to plunder.





03 FIRE A WARNING SHOT

Once a target is in your sights, you could fly false colours and dress as Christian seamen to get close to it. But once you're in range the aim is to intimidate your victim so that they surrender without putting up a fight. Fire a warning shot across their decks with your guns while your crew yell abuse at them and bang drums.



04 BOARD THE SHIP

Once you're alongside the vessel, send over a boarding party. Your janissaries should go across first as few European crews will be willing to battle these elite Ottoman soldiers hand-to-hand. While English and Dutch sailors are known to put up more of a fight, most boarding actions end quickly with the defenders throwing down their weapons.

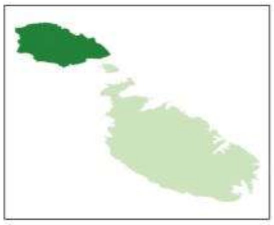
05 SORT THE PLUNDER

Once you control the vessel, search it for any valuables that might be on board or beat the crew to tell you where they've hidden it. However, don't fatally injure them - the passengers and crew are your main prize. The wealthiest will be ransomed back to their families for a high sum, while poor seamen will be sold into slavery.

06 CELEBRATE YOUR VICTORY

Depending on the value or size of your loot, you can either scuttle the captured ship or sail it back to port. In either case, make sure your return to Algiers or Tripoli is a triumphant affair. It's tradition for successful raiders to fly flags and fire guns in celebration when they return home, both to show off and to let slave traders know you're looking to sell!

4 FAMOUS... COASTAL ATTACKS



INVASION OF GOZO

JULY 1551

Turgut Reis attacked Malta and Gozo, temporarily seizing the latter for himself before leaving with most of its population.

CORSICA

JUNE 1501

Napoleon's birthplace was often raided by Barbary slavers like Kemal Reis while his navigator nephew charted the isle's coastline.

ICELANDIC RAID

20 JUNE - 19 JULY 1627

A series of raids led by European renegados including Murat Reis abducted over 400 Icelanders to sell in Salé and Algiers.

SACK OF BALTIMORE

20 JUNE 1631

Reis seized 107 men, women and children from a village in County Cork. Only two or three ever returned to Ireland.

© Ed Crooks

BARBARY GALIOT

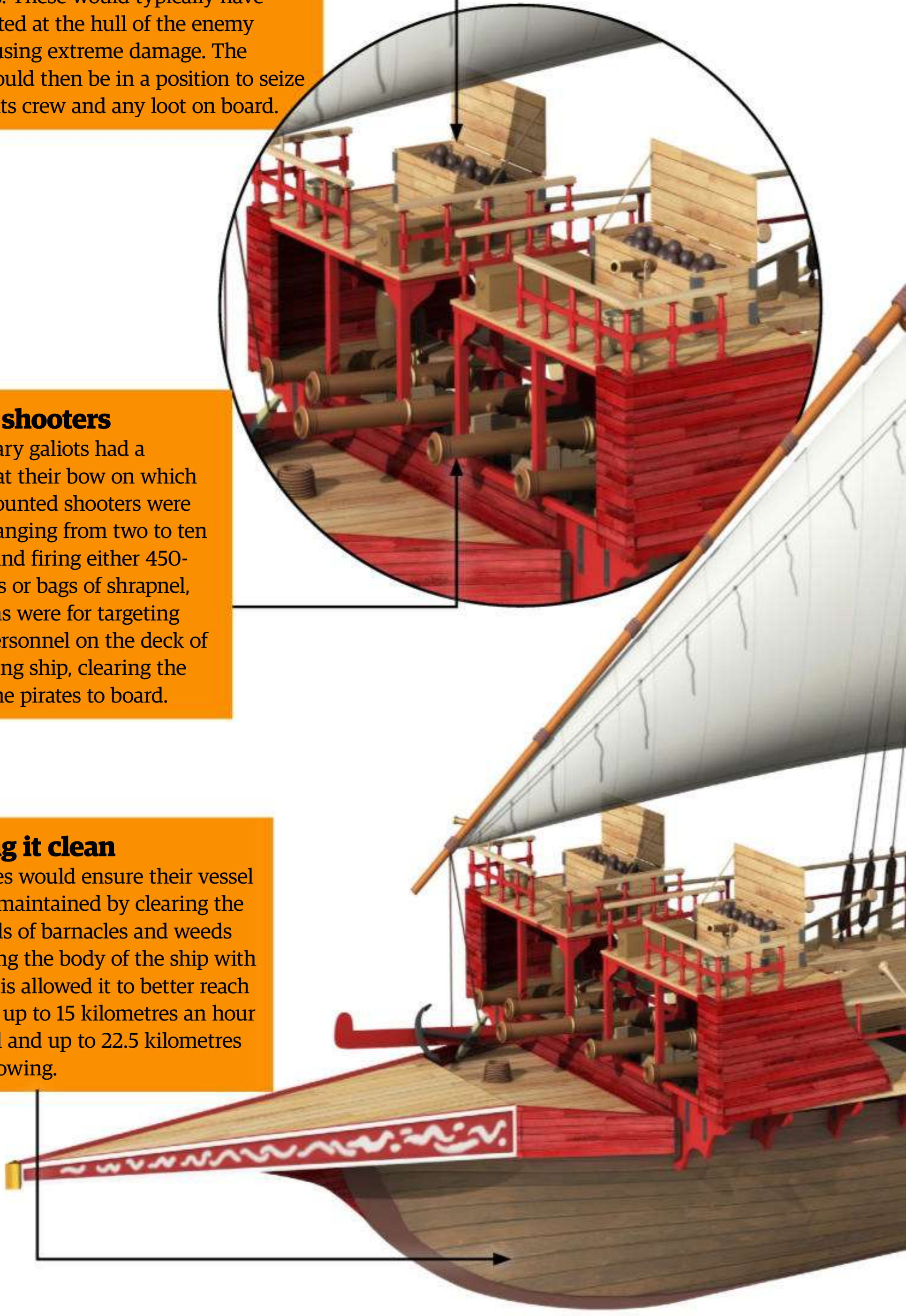
HIGH-SPEED SLAVE SHIP, 15TH-17TH CENTURY

Barbary corsairs used a variety of ships to prey on enemy vessels sailing across the Mediterranean. One of the most popular was the galiot, a small galley boat that was primarily propelled by oars but also had a sail. It could be rowed with great speed, which allowed the pirates to get in and out quickly during raids as well as easily chase down the lumbering merchant vessels that were weighed down with cargo. The galiot's small size also allowed the pirates to hide, swiftly breaking cover once lookouts located easy prey. However, they could only be used during the calm seas of summer as they sat quite low, making them susceptible to taking in water in rough seas.

Although the galiots were the corsairs' favourite ship, longer galleys with 25 pairs of oars were also used. These carried more guns and crew and so had greater fighting potential - for example, for when the privateers were enlisted in an Ottoman naval attack. Occasionally, however, the corsairs would use the smaller barca longas that, with one rower per oar, proved particularly useful for scouting and short-range raiding.

One of the most iconic Barbary ships was the three-masted xebec, which was powered mainly by sail rather than rowing. It had as many as 16 guns and it could sail close hauled to the wind, making the ship effective when in pursuit. Carrying three lateen-rigged sails, however, it was mostly used for trading.

Less versatile were the polaccas, which tended to carry cargo. Meanwhile, the felucca was more of a sailing vessel. Corsairs particularly liked the single-masted tartans that often fooled enemies into thinking they were fishing vessels. But just the sheer fact that the Barbary pirates had so many different kinds of ships showed how well equipped they were.



Great numbers

As a hugely popular ship, the Barbary pirates had many galiots. According to sources, as many as 50 gailots - and several other larger galleys - were based in Algiers during the mid-16th century. From there, they would travel towards the Balearic Islands or the Strait of Gibraltar in search of vessels to prey on.

Single mast

The Barbary galiots had a single mast and these were fitted at an angle with a large triangular sail set on a long yard. The benefit of such a lateen rig was to allow the craft to sail at speed close into the wind but they were never used in combat. Nearly all vessels were lateen rigged after 1500 as Ottoman shipbuilders adopted the design and construction methods of the Portuguese.

Serious firepower

A large gun was mounted at the centre of the ship's bow and it would have fired cannon balls of between 5.4 and 11.8 kilograms. These would typically have been blasted at the hull of the enemy crafts, causing extreme damage. The pirates would then be in a position to seize the ship, its crew and any loot on board.

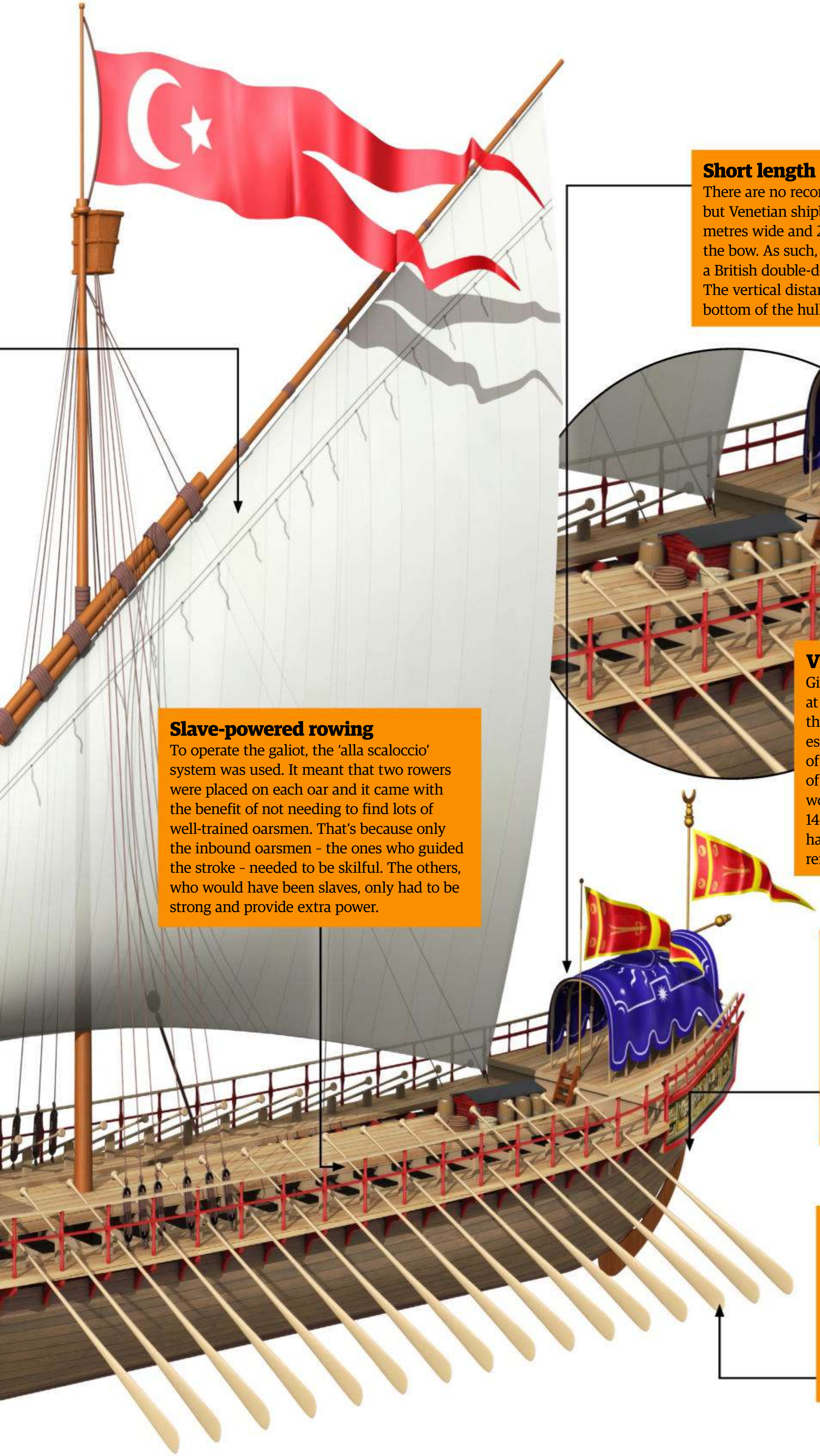
Swivel shooters

The Barbary galiots had a platform at their bow on which swivel-mounted shooters were placed. Ranging from two to ten per ship and firing either 450-gram balls or bags of shrapnel, these guns were for targeting enemy personnel on the deck of an opposing ship, clearing the way for the pirates to board.

Keeping it clean

The pirates would ensure their vessel was well maintained by clearing the lower hulls of barnacles and weeds and coating the body of the ship with a wax. This allowed it to better reach speeds of up to 15 kilometres an hour under sail and up to 22.5 kilometres an hour rowing.

Barbary Galiot



Short length

There are no records of the exact size of a Barbary galiot but Venetian shipbuilding sources suggest they were three metres wide and 27 metres in length, including the spur at the bow. As such, they were one-and-a-half times as long as a British double-decker bus (and roughly the same width). The vertical distance between the waterline and the bottom of the hull – the draft of the ship – was two metres.

Vital supplies

Given that the pirates would have been at sea for weeks, it was important that there were sufficient supplies on board, especially given the scorching hot weather of the Mediterranean. About 1,800 gallons of water were taken on board and this would have lasted a crew of around 140 roughly 20 days. The pirates would have bases where they could gain extra refreshments, however.

Slave-powered rowing

To operate the galiot, the 'alla scaloccio' system was used. It meant that two rowers were placed on each oar and it came with the benefit of not needing to find lots of well-trained oarsmen. That's because only the inbound oarsmen – the ones who guided the stroke – needed to be skilful. The others, who would have been slaves, only had to be strong and provide extra power.

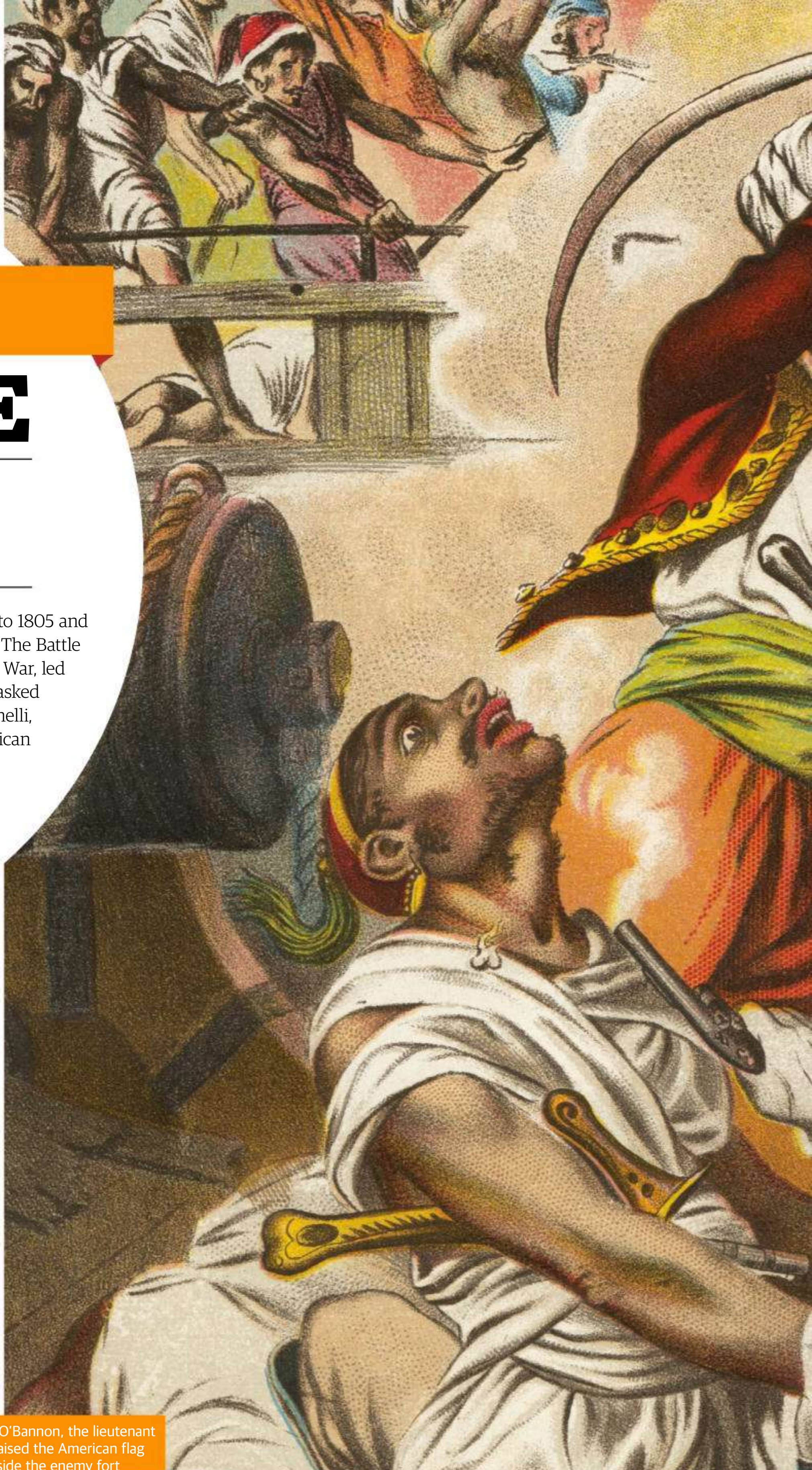
Sitting low

The distance from the waterline to the upper deck of the ship was short, which meant the galiot was able to sit low in the water. This reduced the drag and weight of the craft, allowing it to move more quickly through the sea, but it also meant that Barbary galiots were not suitable for lengthy voyages in open water and the hull was rather cramped.

Numerous oars

Galiots were historically small galley ships – the type that are propelled mainly by rowing. To that end, they needed to have sets of oars and this particular type of ship had between 16 and 20 pairs (although typically they had 18), all neatly lined up on both sides of the boat.

© Adrian Mann



Day in the life

US MARINE

THE CORPS THAT DEFINED THE BARBARY WARS; DERNA, TRIPOLI, 27 APRIL 1805

The US went to war with the Barbary States from 1801 to 1805 and then again in 1815 in an effort to curtail corsair attacks. The Battle of Derna was the decisive skirmish of the First Barbary War, led by Lieutenants William Eaton and Presley O'Bannon. Tasked with restoring a deposed pasha of Tripoli, Hamet Caramelli, in the belief that he would be more favourable to American ships, they trekked from Alexandria, Egypt, to Derna, in modern-day Libya. Though their success was undermined when the US signed a peace treaty that saw Caramelli removed again in return for hostages, the battle led to the line 'To the shores of Tripoli' being added to the Marine's Hymn as well as the adoption of the Mameluke sword by the Corps.

SETTING UP

On the day of the battle, the US warships Argus, Nautilus and Hornet all converged ready to launch the attack on Derna, with Nautilus anchoring close to the shore. Eaton had led his troops 800 kilometres through the North African desert to Derna, only to be refused entry by the governor - who tauntingly challenged Eaton to attack.

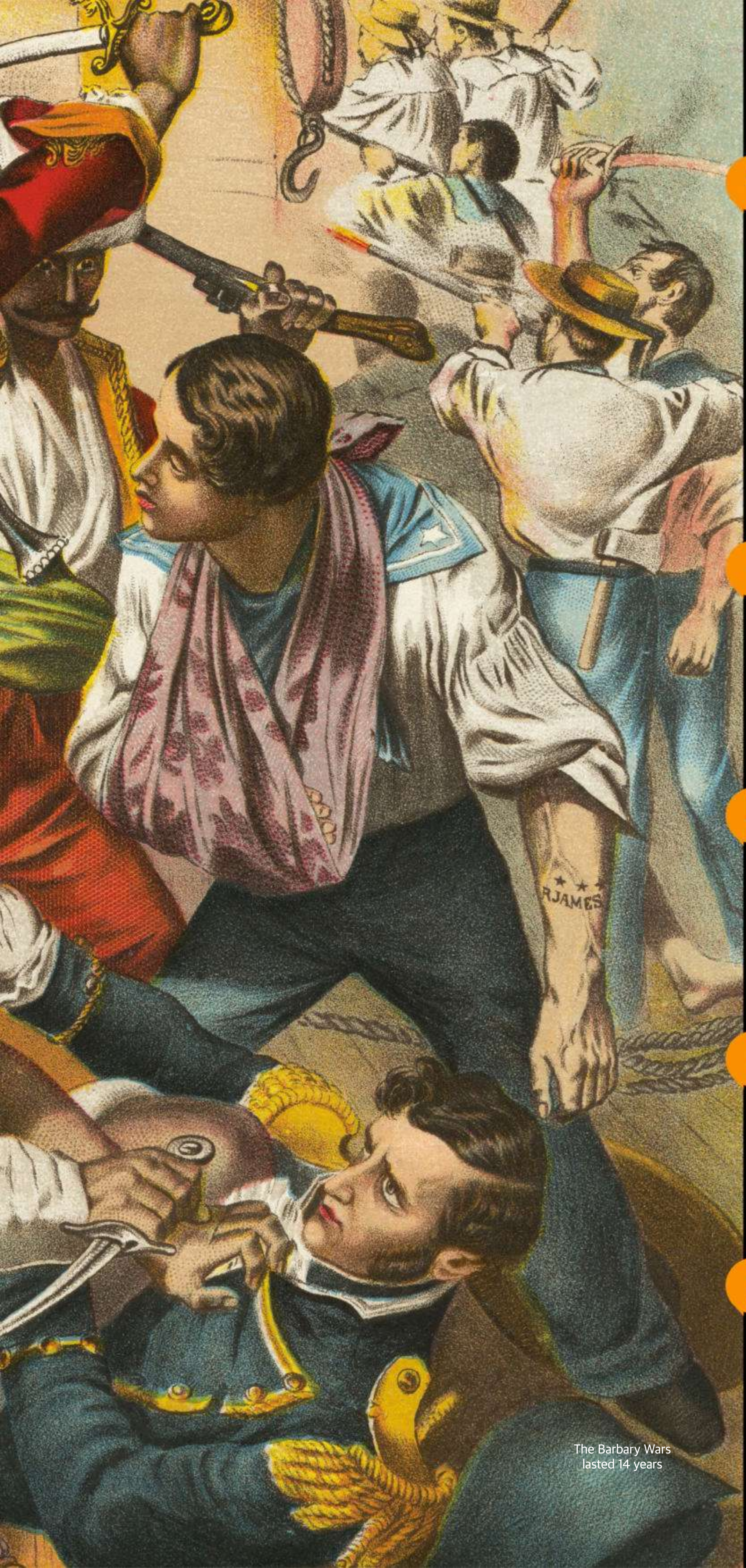
COMMUNICATION

The ships opened up communication with each other to discuss their plan of attack. The night before, Eaton told Nautilus that he wanted to launch an offensive as soon as possible once the field artillery had been landed. Cover provided by the ships would be crucial to the success of the assault as the US Marines were outnumbered.

LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS

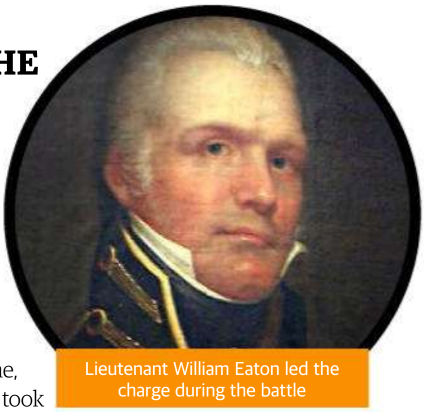
Eaton sent a message to the Marines on board Argus requesting that they land their field artillery as soon as possible, so that he could begin his march on the city. However, Argus struggled to land its guns on the shore and in the end only one arrived. To avoid wasting time, Eaton decided to continue with the assault regardless.

Presley O'Bannon, the lieutenant who raised the American flag inside the enemy fort


The Barbary Wars lasted 14 years

Day in the life: US Marine

BEGIN THE ATTACK


Lieutenant William Eaton led the charge during the battle

Once the field artillery was ready, Eaton ordered the start of the land offensive. In the meantime, the three ships took up their positions along the shore and began to fire heavily on the city. While all of this was happening, enemy fire rained down from the fort for around an hour, making it difficult for the United States to advance.

TAKING CONTROL

Using the ship's heavy fire as cover, the American soldiers bravely charged towards the Berber fort. As the enemy fled in terror, members of Argus, including Lieutenant O'Bannon, ran inside and removed the native flag. In its place, they raised the Stars and Stripes and took control of the fort's guns, which were primed and ready for immediate use thanks to the vacated Berbers who had been firing them beforehand.

SECURE THE VICTORY

The US forces managed to successfully capture both the city and the fort. They then sent in boats to deliver ammunition for the soldiers as well as to recover those Marines who were wounded and needed medical attention. Eaton left orders with the fort and he personally made his way to Derna in order to make sure that everything was organised, and that security had been arranged for the evening.

A WAR HERO

After ensuring that the city was secure, Eaton returned to one of the ships in order to receive medical attention himself. During the battle, he had been seriously injured when he was hit in the left wrist by a musket ball while leading the charge. Nevertheless, Eaton survived and he returned to his home country a hero along with O'Bannon and the rest of the troops.

REST AND RECUPERATE

With Derna firmly under the control of the United States after two hours of bloody fighting, it was time for the troops to rest and savour their victory. While the American forces ultimately suffered minimal losses, approximately 800 Tripolitans were killed by the end of the skirmish and 1,200 were wounded, with many more forcibly driven out of the city.

© Getty Images

Colonial

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A dark period of history begins

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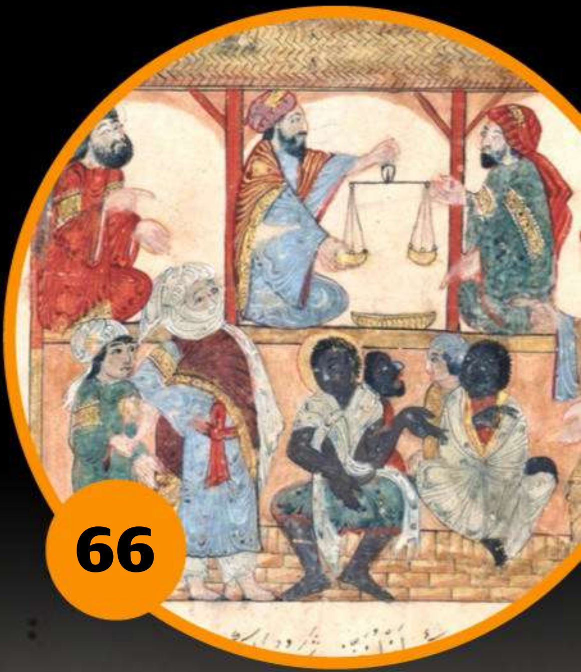
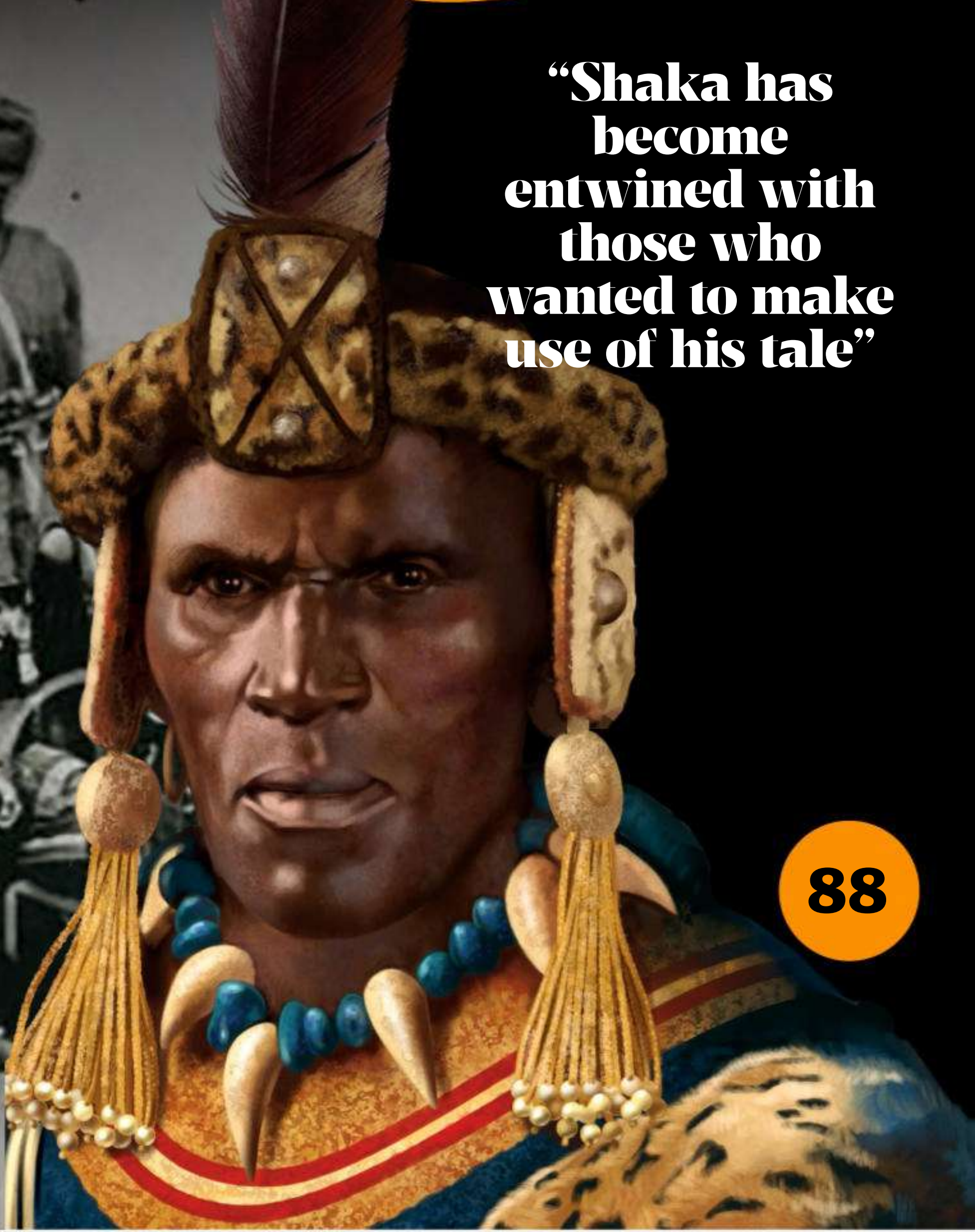
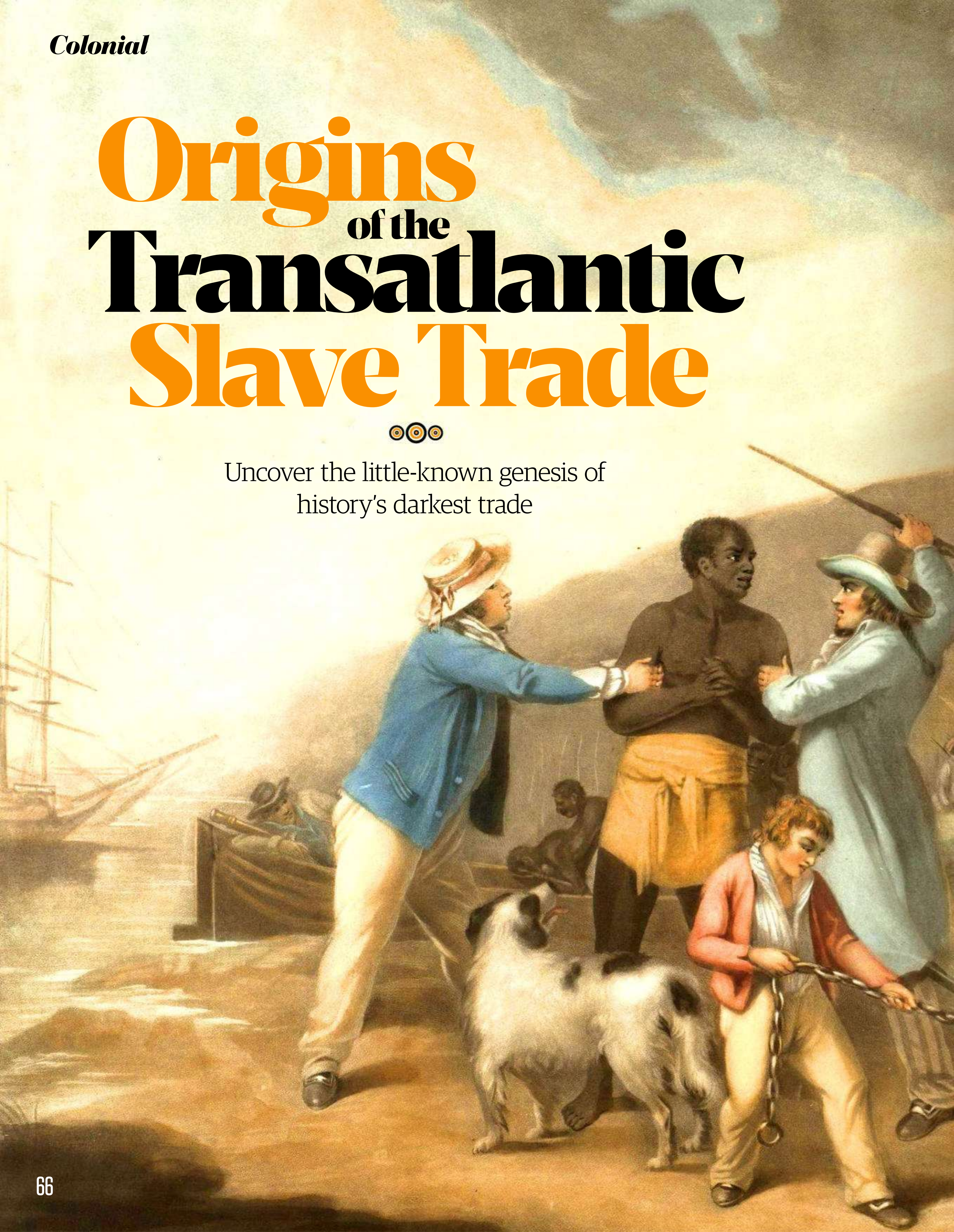
How an exile used cunning and guile to become an iconic African king



“Shaka has become entwined with those who wanted to make use of his tale”





Origins of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Uncover the little-known genesis of history's darkest trade

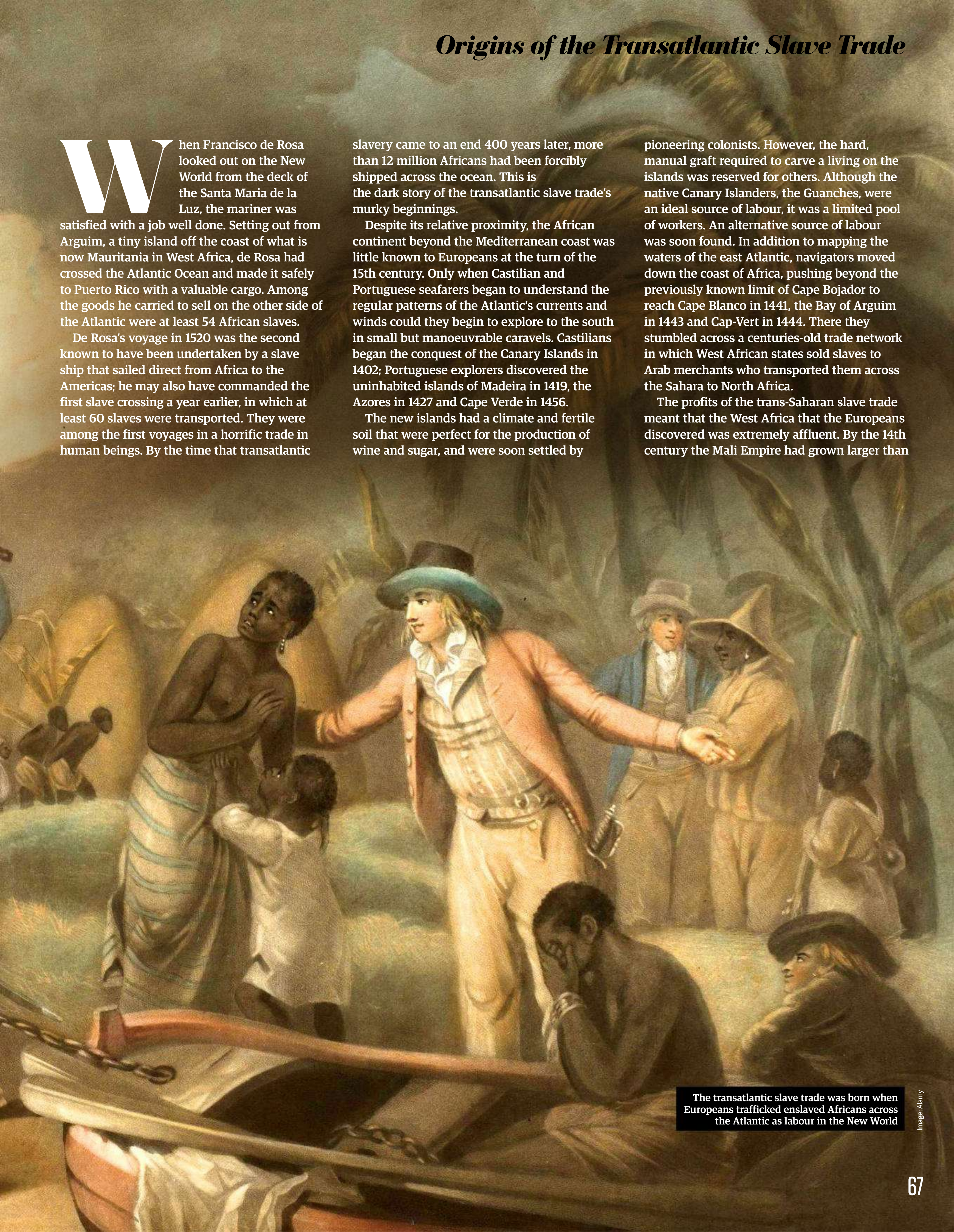
When Francisco de Rosa looked out on the New World from the deck of the Santa Maria de la Luz, the mariner was satisfied with a job well done. Setting out from Arguim, a tiny island off the coast of what is now Mauritania in West Africa, de Rosa had crossed the Atlantic Ocean and made it safely to Puerto Rico with a valuable cargo. Among the goods he carried to sell on the other side of the Atlantic were at least 54 African slaves.

De Rosa's voyage in 1520 was the second known to have been undertaken by a slave ship that sailed direct from Africa to the Americas; he may also have commanded the first slave crossing a year earlier, in which at least 60 slaves were transported. They were among the first voyages in a horrific trade in human beings. By the time that transatlantic slavery came to an end 400 years later, more than 12 million Africans had been forcibly shipped across the ocean. This is the dark story of the transatlantic slave trade's murky beginnings.

Despite its relative proximity, the African continent beyond the Mediterranean coast was little known to Europeans at the turn of the 15th century. Only when Castilian and Portuguese seafarers began to understand the regular patterns of the Atlantic's currents and winds could they begin to explore to the south in small but manoeuvrable caravels. Castilians began the conquest of the Canary Islands in 1402; Portuguese explorers discovered the uninhabited islands of Madeira in 1419, the Azores in 1427 and Cape Verde in 1456.

The new islands had a climate and fertile soil that were perfect for the production of wine and sugar, and were soon settled by pioneering colonists. However, the hard, manual graft required to carve a living on the islands was reserved for others. Although the native Canary Islanders, the Guanches, were an ideal source of labour, it was a limited pool of workers. An alternative source of labour was soon found. In addition to mapping the waters of the east Atlantic, navigators moved down the coast of Africa, pushing beyond the previously known limit of Cape Bojador to reach Cape Blanco in 1441, the Bay of Arguim in 1443 and Cap-Vert in 1444. There they stumbled across a centuries-old trade network in which West African states sold slaves to Arab merchants who transported them across the Sahara to North Africa.

The profits of the trans-Saharan slave trade meant that the West Africa that the Europeans discovered was extremely affluent. By the 14th century the Mali Empire had grown larger than

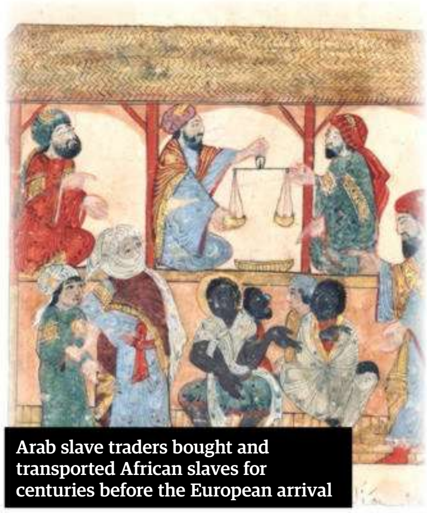


The transatlantic slave trade was born when Europeans trafficked enslaved Africans across the Atlantic as labour in the New World

Image: Alamy

Africa's other slave trade

Slavery was already endemic in African societies when European explorers first came down the west coast. Slaves may have been punished for a crime or debt or were members of a rival tribe who had been captured in war or kidnapped by a raiding party. However, African slaves may have held a different status to those who were unfortunate enough to be chattel slaves on the other side of the Atlantic - they may have had some rights, like owning property and holding public office. When Islam began to spread into Africa in the 7th century, Muslim traders began to range south in search of new markets and partners. Pioneers discovered routes through the Sahara Desert that passed life-preserving oases, often concluding their journeys at Sijilmasa or Kairouan in modern Morocco and Tunisia. Thousands of slaves were taken across the desert each year for use as workers, domestic servants and concubines in North Africa and the wider Islamic world.


Arab slave traders bought and transported African slaves for centuries before the European arrival

Western Europe. When its leader Mansa Musa visited Cairo on his hajj pilgrimage in 1324, his procession reportedly included 60,000 men, of whom 12,000 were slaves carrying gold bars to pay his way. So vast was his fortune that Musa's party inadvertently caused inflation as prices rocketed in response, devaluing gold for more than a decade after his visit. Emperor Askia the Great of the Songhai Empire completed a similarly opulent hajj more than a century later, while the Kingdom of Kongo was an affluent trading state of half a million people with an impressive capital at M'banza-Kongo.

It was tales of such prosperity and gold that drew European explorers to the African coast like moths to a light, eager to trade with the rich rulers. In 1445 the Portuguese established a trading post on a small island in a sheltered bay just off the coast of modern Mauritania. Arguim gave the merchants a base from which they could acquire gold and other commodities, including slaves, who could fetch a decent price in Europe or the island colonies of the east Atlantic. By 1455 up to 800 slaves a year were being transported from Arguim to Portugal; by the turn of the century some 81,000 slaves had been transported from the African coast on Portuguese ships and as much as ten per cent of the population of Lisbon may have been African or of African descent.

The use of Africans as labour in Europe and her colonies provided a steady but small flow of slaves from West African trading ports. However, demand for slaves rocketed after the first explorers returned from the other side of the ocean with tales of vast, unclaimed lands.

When Christopher Columbus discovered Hispaniola - the island containing modern Haiti and the Dominican Republic - in 1492, it was probably home to hundreds of thousands of indigenous inhabitants, the Taíno. However, Spanish colonisation was violent. Any natives who opposed the conquerors were mercilessly cut down, while European diseases for which the Taíno had no immunity cut through the population; the first smallpox epidemic in Hispaniola and Puerto Rico may have claimed the lives of around two-thirds of the native population. Within just 30 years, the number of natives plummeted by around 85 per cent. By 1514, according to a Spanish census, there were only 26,000 Taíno left under Spanish control. The rich gold mines and agricultural fields that the Spanish had discovered in the New World would be useless if there was nobody to work in them.

It was a situation repeated across the Caribbean - millions of native inhabitants of the islands may have died in the first two or three decades of Spanish expansion. With no local workforce, slaves were shipped from the west coast of Africa to Europe, and from there onto the New World. The first African slaves known to have landed in the Americas reached Hispaniola in 1502, while four African slaves are known to have been shipped from Europe to Cuba in 1513. The Spanish had lost one workforce; their solution was to ship another in from the other side of the ocean.

On 18 August 1518, King Charles I of Spain made the new transatlantic slave trade ruthlessly efficient when he issued a new document that authorised the transportation of slaves direct from Africa to the Americas. The charter

N
W
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NORTH AMERICA

SLAVE CENTRES

1. ARGUIM
One of the first European slave trading bases off the coast of Africa, established in 1445.

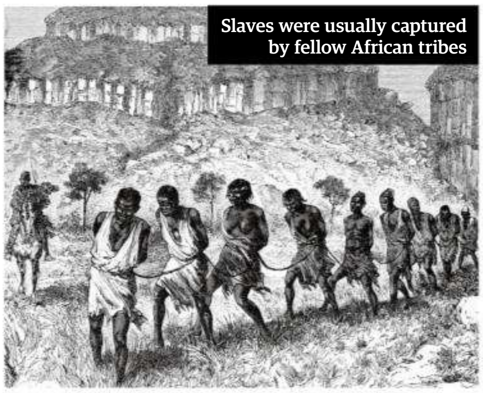
2. SAO TOME
An island trading base that was a hub for slaves trafficked to the Americas from the Kingdom of Kongo.

3. ELMINA CASTLE
Built in 1482, the slave-holding castle is now the oldest European building south of the Sahara.

4. CANARY ISLANDS
The earliest European demand for African slaves arose from a need for workers in the island colonies of the east Atlantic.

5. HISPANIOLA
The first known African slaves in the Americas arrived in Hispaniola in 1502 after a circuitous passage via Europe.

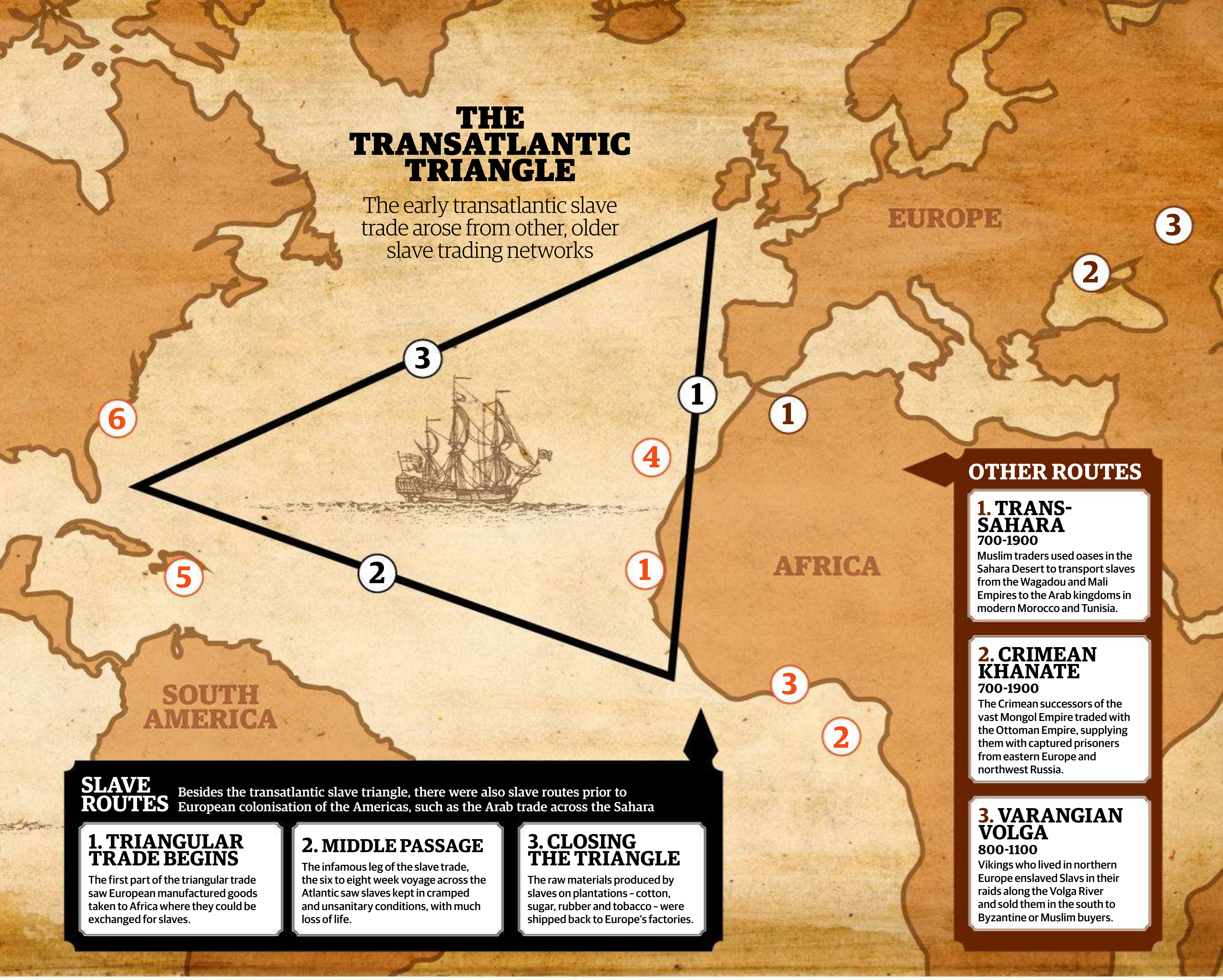
6. SAN MIGUEL DE GUALDAPE
Founded in 1526 by Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, the 600 colonists of the first Spanish attempt to colonise the mainland included a number of slaves.


Slaves were usually captured by fellow African tribes

> "Demand for slaves rocketed after the first explorers returned from the other side of the ocean with tales of unclaimed lands"

THE TRANSATLANTIC TRIANGLE

The early transatlantic slave trade arose from other, older slave trading networks



SLAVE ROUTES

Besides the transatlantic slave triangle, there were also slave routes prior to European colonisation of the Americas, such as the Arab trade across the Sahara

1. TRIANGULAR TRADE BEGINS

The first part of the triangular trade saw European manufactured goods taken to Africa where they could be exchanged for slaves.

2. MIDDLE PASSAGE

The infamous leg of the slave trade, the six to eight week voyage across the Atlantic saw slaves kept in cramped and unsanitary conditions, with much loss of life.

3. CLOSING THE TRIANGLE

The raw materials produced by slaves on plantations – cotton, sugar, rubber and tobacco – were shipped back to Europe's factories.

OTHER ROUTES

1. TRANS-SAHARA

700-1900

Muslim traders used oases in the Sahara Desert to transport slaves from the Wagadou and Mali Empires to the Arab kingdoms in modern Morocco and Tunisia.

2. CRIMEAN KHANATE

700-1900

The Crimean successors of the vast Mongol Empire traded with the Ottoman Empire, supplying them with captured prisoners from eastern Europe and northwest Russia.

3. VARANGIAN VOLGA

800-1100

Vikings who lived in northern Europe enslaved Slavs in their raids along the Volga River and sold them in the south to Byzantine or Muslim buyers.

allowed Lorenzo de Gorrevod, a trusted advisor and member of the king's council of state, to transport "four thousand Negro slaves both male and female" to "the Indies, the islands and the mainland of the ocean sea, already discovered or to be discovered" by ship "direct from the isles of Guinea and other regions from which they are wont to bring the said negros".

The charter was a reward to de Gorrevod for good service, a chance to make a fortune by granting him the first chance to profit from a new trade route, but he had no intention of involving himself directly in human trafficking. The rights granted to him were subcontracted and resold a number of times until they fell into the hands of a Genoese merchant, Domingo de Fornari; two Castilian merchants, Juan de la Torre and Juan Fernandez de Castro, and a Seville-based Genoese banker, Gaspar Centurion. They arranged for various seafarers to carry out the work of transporting 4,000 African slaves from one side of the Atlantic to the other. At least four voyages took place, in 1519, 1520 – the voyage under the command of Francisco de Rosa – May 1521 and October 1521. Each departed from Arguim and landed in Puerto Rico, although it is likely that other ships carried slaves from Arguim to Hispaniola. There were also at least six slave voyages from Cape Verde to the Caribbean between 1518 and 1530.

By 1522 direct slave voyages had begun from another starting point: the island of São Tomé some 2,000 miles along the African coast, opposite what is now Gabon. Among these voyages was a ship carrying 139 slaves that voyaged across the Atlantic in 1522, and another with as many as 248 in 1529. The first enslaved Africans to reach mainland North America arrived in 1526 as part of an ill-fated Spanish attempt to colonise San Miguel de Gualdape, while African burials at a cemetery in Campeche, Mexico, suggest that African slaves may have been shipped to Central America almost as soon as Hernán Cortés had subjugated the Aztec and Mayan empires. The colonisation of the New World was inextricably linked to slavery.

The transatlantic slave trade was born. From relatively humble beginnings, the number of slaves crossing the ocean would grow and grow. British slave ships would soon eclipse the deeds of their Iberian predecessors, transporting millions of slaves in the 18th century.

The scars of the slave trade still remain today. While slave labour in the colonies helped European powers to become rich, industrial nations, the African population and economy stagnated and fell behind the rest of the world. Ever-increasing European demands meant that slave-trading African rulers needed to have a growing, ready supply of slave labour, triggering raids and wars that unsettled the continent and left a legacy of tribal conflict and civil wars. An African diaspora exists throughout North and South America, but long-held racial prejudices have simmered well beyond the end of the slave trade and into the 21st century, especially in the United States. The ill effects of the 400-year transatlantic slave trade were unintended consequences of the Age of Discovery.

Images: Getty Images (African tribes, map)

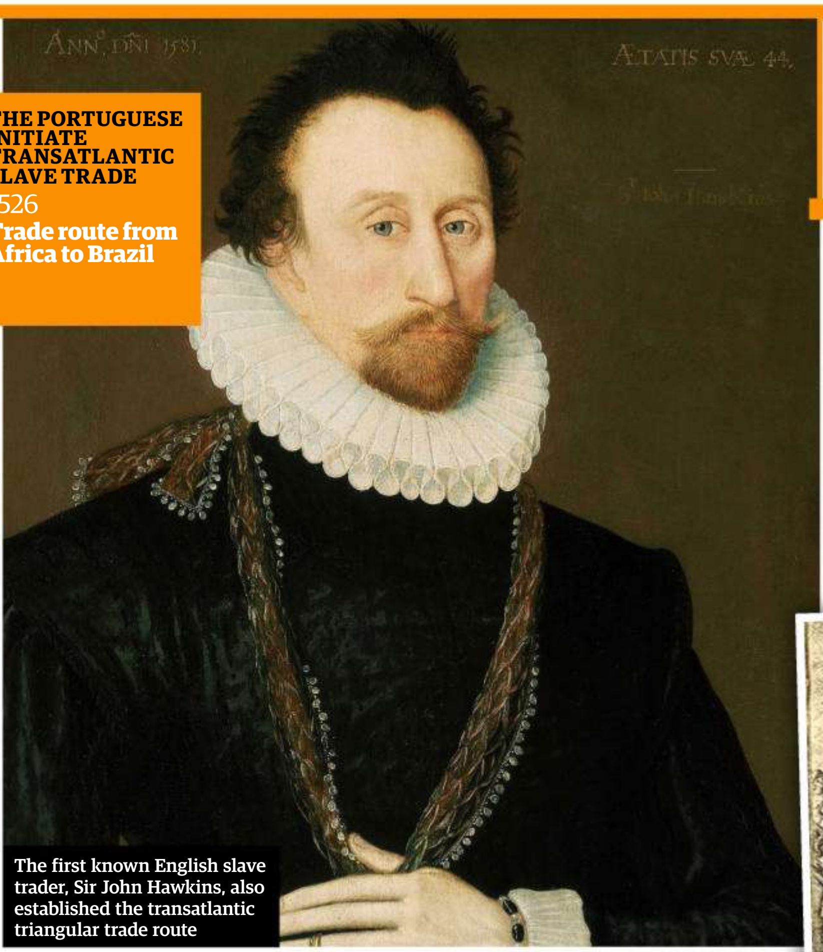
The Transatlantic Slave Trade Timeline

European economic development and the exploitation of resources in the Americas fuelled the emergence of the African slave trade

THE PORTUGUESE INITIATE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

1526

Trade route from Africa to Brazil



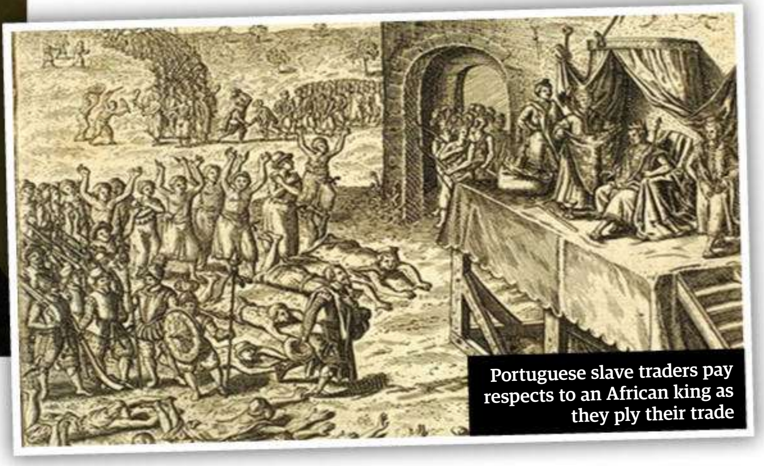
The first known English slave trader, Sir John Hawkins, also established the transatlantic triangular trade route

SIR JOHN HAWKINS ESTABLISHES ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

1562-69

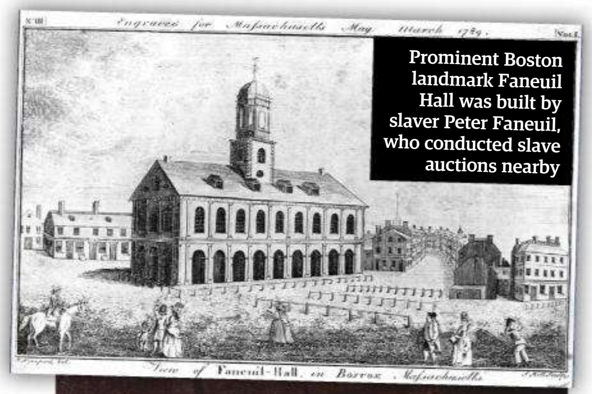
Trade routes from England to Africa and the New World

Conducting three voyages from England to Sierra Leone on the coast of West Africa and then to the island of Hispaniola, Sir John Hawkins is the first Englishman considered to be actively involved in the transatlantic slave trade. His voyages establish the triangular trade route, standard for more than two centuries. Ships depart ports in England and other European countries laden with goods to be traded for slaves on the African coast. The slaves are then transported across the Atlantic Ocean via the notorious Middle Passage and sold as labourers to plantation owners in the New World. Completing the triangle, ships transport commodities such as cotton, sugar, rum, tobacco and coffee back to Europe.



Portuguese slave traders pay respects to an African king as they ply their trade

KING JAMES I CHARTERS THE COMPANY OF ADVENTURERS OF LONDON TRADING TO THE PORTS OF AFRICA
1618
London, England

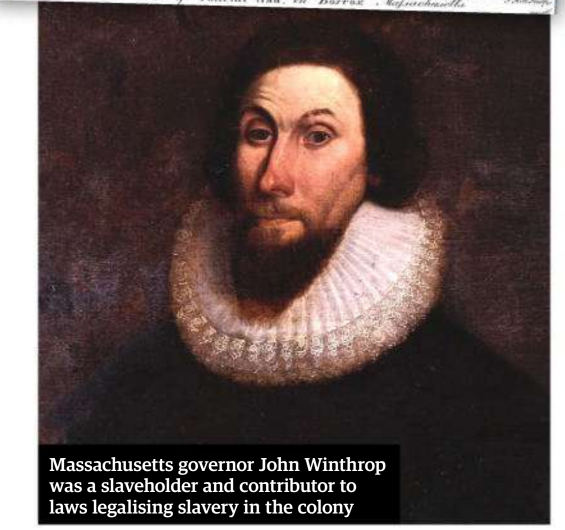

Engraved for Massachusetts Mag. March 1789.
View of Faneuil-Hall in Boston Massachusetts

Prominent Boston landmark Faneuil Hall was built by slaver Peter Faneuil, who conducted slave auctions nearby

MASSACHUSETTS LEGALISES SLAVERY

10 December 1641
Boston, Massachusetts

A slave owner himself, Governor John Winthrop is a principal author of the Massachusetts Bodies of Liberty, the first collection of laws that legalise the institution of slavery in North America. Samuel Maverick, an owner of two slaves, had brought them to the English colony in 1624, while the first slaves imported directly to Massachusetts from Africa made their arrival in 1634. In 1638, the slave ship Desire had brought enslaved Africans from Barbados in the Caribbean, and these were exchanged for members of the Pequot tribe captured in New England and placed in bondage. Between 1755 and 1764, the number of slaves in Massachusetts rises to 2.2 per cent of the total population.

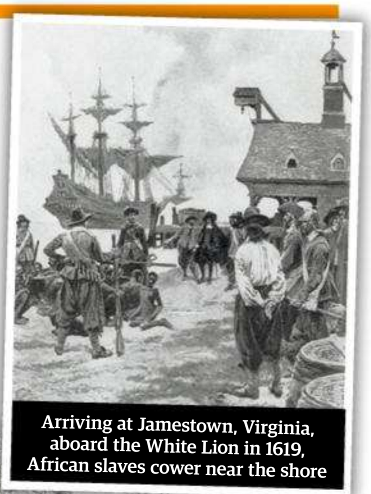


Massachusetts governor John Winthrop was a slaveholder and contributor to laws legalising slavery in the colony

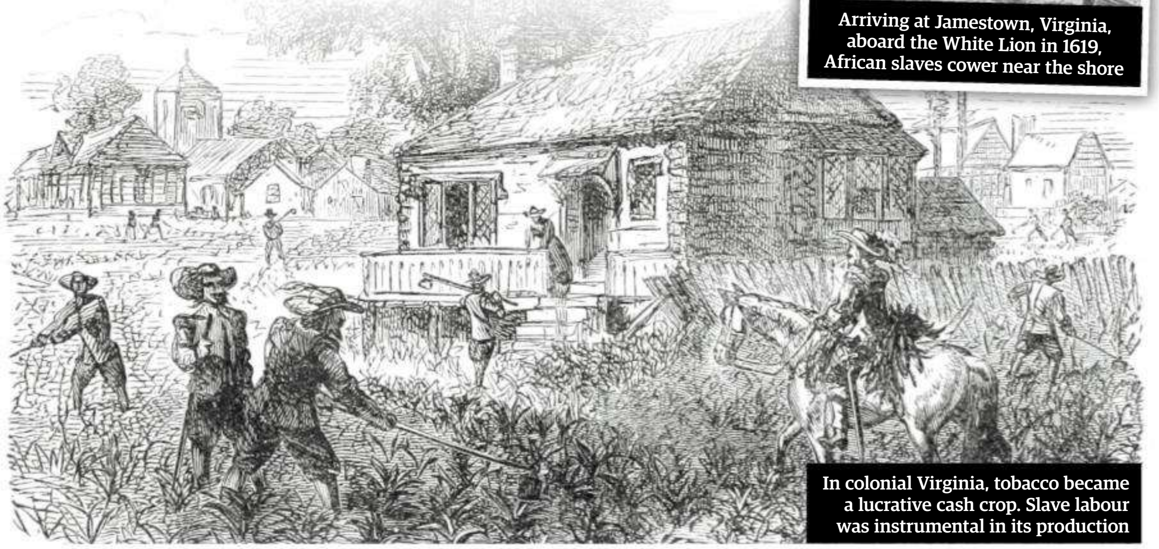
SLAVES INTRODUCED AT JAMESTOWN

20 August 1619
Jamestown, Virginia

Sailing from the Caribbean, an English privateer, the White Lion, reaches Point Comfort, now Hampton Roads, not far from Jamestown, Virginia, the first permanent English-speaking colony in North America. They trade 20 African slaves for food and other provisions. These are the first slaves imported to Britain's North American colonies. During a span of four centuries, an estimated 12 to 13 million enslaved Africans are brought to North and South America by European traders to toil as field workers, house servants and labourers.



Arriving at Jamestown, Virginia, aboard the White Lion in 1619, African slaves cower near the shore



In colonial Virginia, tobacco became a lucrative cash crop. Slave labour was instrumental in its production

Of Human Bondage

Slavery or involuntary servitude has been an element of civilisation for thousands of years

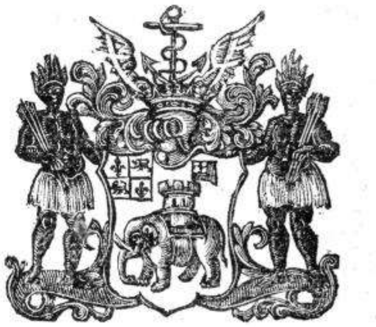
From earliest recorded history, the concept of slavery or involuntary servitude has existed, transcending cultural or ethical conditions and enabling those who have exploited human suffering to build immense wealth and exert control over subservient peoples.

With the emergence of social classes, slavery developed in Sumeria and Mesopotamia, even being referenced in the Code of Hammurabi as an institution with its purpose and place in society. The development of slavery in civilisation stemmed from the need for labour, simply the performance of functions that contributed to the augmentation of wealth or the increase of status. Slaves were either captured during raids and transported to markets to be sold as commodities, taken prisoner during battles among rival kingdoms or empires and cast into bondage as the spoils of war, sold or surrendered by next of kin to serve a monarch or person of high social status, or punished for some egregious crime.

From 3,500 BCE forward, records of slave enterprises in Sumeria have survived. Biblical references to slavery abound, particularly that of the Hebrew people delivered by God from bondage in Egypt. Slavery cast its shadow across the glory of the Roman Empire and the magnificence of classical Greece. Examples of slavery and involuntary servitude in ancient China and other Asian cultures attest that the institution has not been confined only to Western civilisation, and that the transatlantic slave trade was an extension of a practice that predated its horrors for centuries. Numerous African kingdoms, in fact, held slavery in high regard, even revered the concept of enslaving the vanquished of neighbouring empires following military victories. Slavery, therefore, is as old as civilisation itself, a symptom of the human condition – and one of its basest elements.

Trudging along in chains, Roman slaves are led toward an ancient and uncertain future

Image: Jun/CC BY-SA 2.0 (Roman slaves)

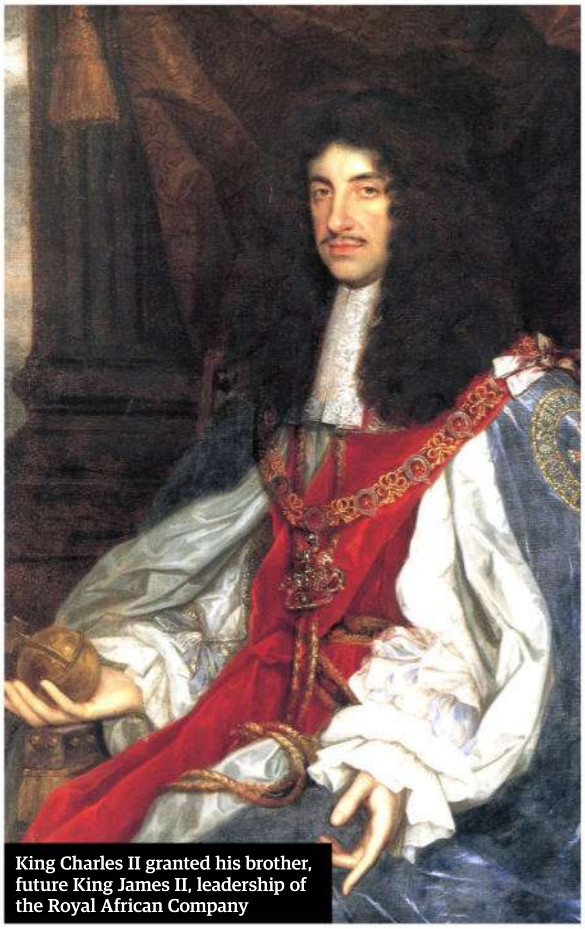


ROYAL AFRICAN COMPANY CHARTERED

24 September 1672

London, England

King Charles II grants a charter to the Royal African Company, effectively a monopoly of the English slave trade on the west coast of Africa from the Cape of Good Hope to the western reaches of the Sahara Desert. The Royal African Company is led by the Duke of York, the future King James II and brother of King Charles II. Financed by numerous aristocratic investors, the enterprise will transport more African slaves to the Americas than any other in the history of the transatlantic trade.



King Charles II granted his brother, future King James II, leadership of the Royal African Company

GRANVILLE SHARP INITIATES LEGAL CHALLENGE TO BRITISH SLAVE TRADE

1765

London, England

TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE LEADS SLAVE UPRISING IN SAINT DOMINGUE

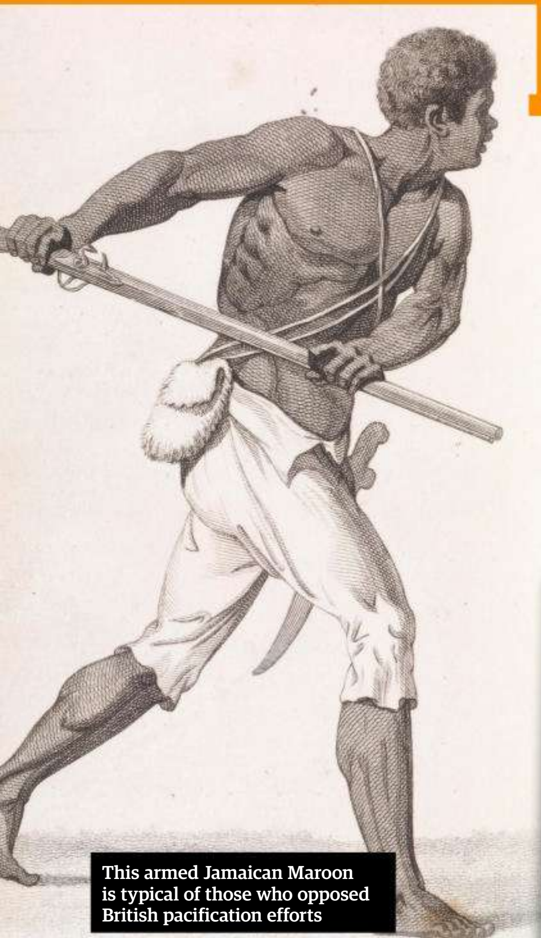
1791

French Caribbean colony of Saint Domingue

INVENTION OF THE COTTON GIN

1794

Savannah, Georgia



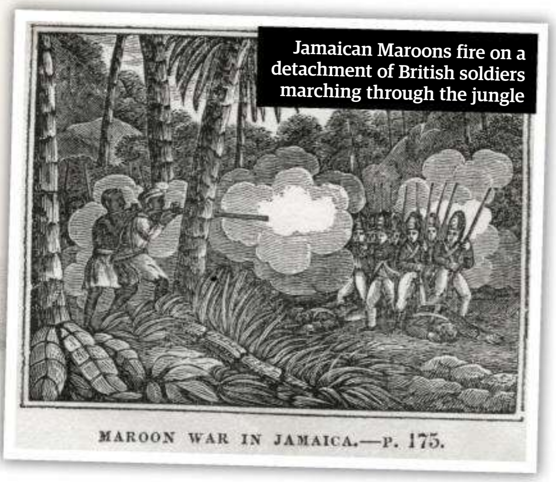
This armed Jamaican Maroon is typical of those opposed British pacification efforts

FIRST MAROON WAR

1728-40

Jamaica

While the Caribbean island of Jamaica is under Spanish rule, slaves sometimes escape, reaching the mountains and isolated areas, blending with indigenous peoples, and maintaining a degree of freedom. However, after Britain wrests control of Jamaica from Spain in 1655, revolts erupt and the number of so-called 'maroons' increases. British attempts to quell the unrest and control the entire island escalate into the First Maroon War. Although Britain commits substantial numbers of troops to the pacification effort, a stalemate results in an agreement allowing the maroons to live in certain areas without British interference. In exchange, the maroons are to assist in returning escaped slaves and protecting Jamaica from outside threats.


MAROON WAR IN JAMAICA.—P. 175.

Jamaican Maroons fire on a detachment of British soldiers marching through the jungle

STONO REBELLION ERUPTS

9 September 1739

South Carolina

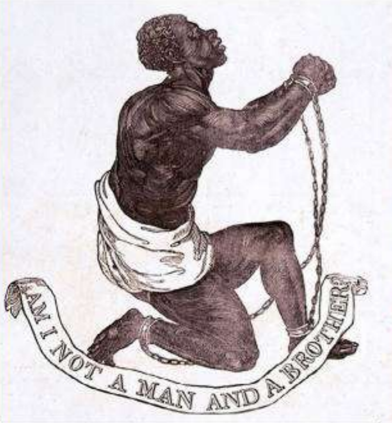
Jemmy, a literate slave also known as Cato, leads a group of 20 slaves in rebellion along the coast of the South Carolina Lowcountry. From the owner's plantation on the Stono River, Jemmy and his cohorts grow to more than 80 in number, killing up to 25 colonists as they march toward Florida, where the Spanish have promised freedom to slaves who escape the British. However, the South Carolina militia meets the escapees near the Edisto River and suppresses the uprising, killing 35-50 slaves.

The Broadway show *Drumfolk* was inspired by the events of the Stono Rebellion

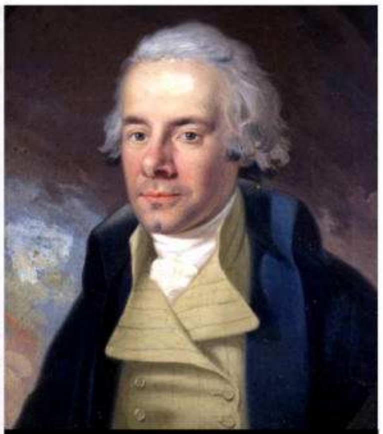
SLAVE TRADE ACT

25 March 1807
London, England

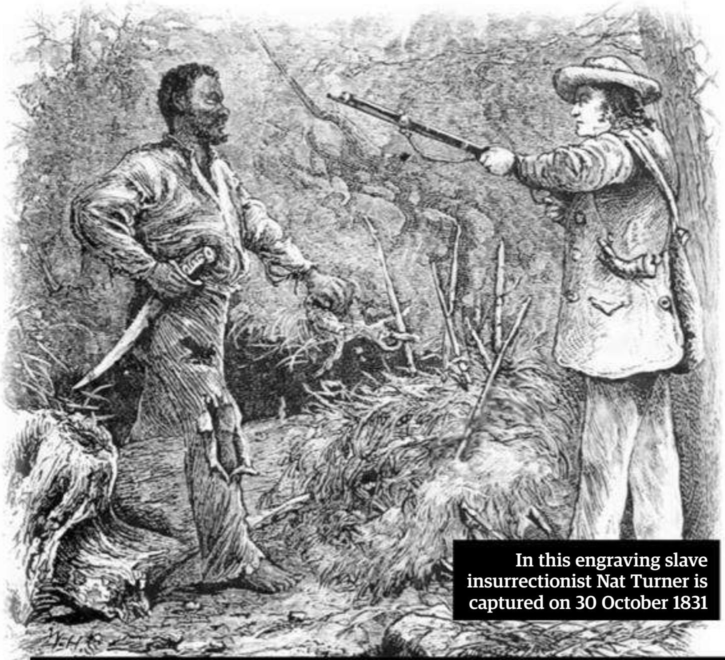
Largely due to the efforts of William Wilberforce and his associates, who had taken up the cause of abolishing slavery in Great Britain 20 years earlier, Parliament passes the Slave Trade Act of 1807. Although the act prohibits the slave trade in the British Empire, it does not abolish the practice of slavery; however, Britain urges other nations to consider abolishing its sanction of the slave trade as well. At the time the act is passed, the slave trade remains one of the most profitable business ventures in the Empire, although the institution is not formally ended in Britain until the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.


AM I NOT A MAN AND A BROTHER?

This poignant medallion became the symbol of the British Anti-Slavery Society



William Wilberforce championed the effort to abolish slavery in Great Britain

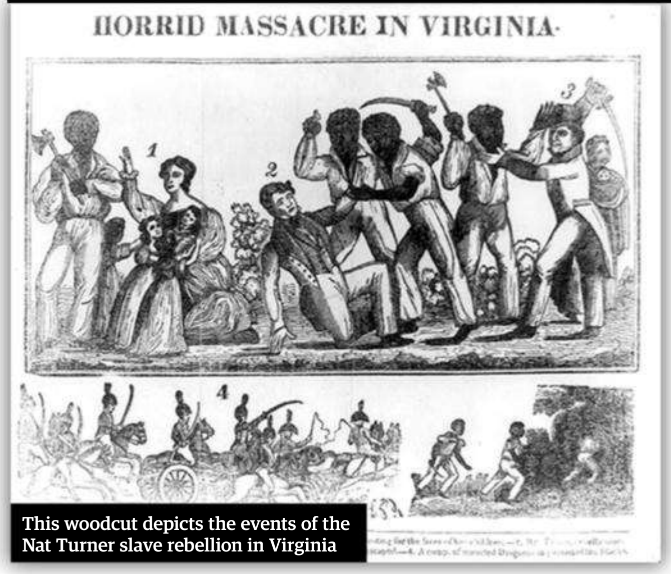


In this engraving slave insurrectionist Nat Turner is captured on 30 October 1831

NAT TURNER'S REBELLION

21-23 August 1831
Southampton County, Virginia

Slave and preacher Nat Turner leads perhaps the most famous slave uprising in American history. Armed with axes and clubs, Turner and about 70 other slaves began their short-lived rebellion with a murderous rampage, killing more than 50 White people. Although the rebellion is put down at Belmont Plantation within days, Turner remains at large for two months. He is captured and executed amid a wave of retaliation in which approximately 160 Black people are executed by the state of Virginia or murdered.



This woodcut depicts the events of the Nat Turner slave rebellion in Virginia

THE UNITED STATES BANS AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE
1808
Washington, DC

SPAIN ABOLISHES THE SLAVE TRADE
1820
Madrid, Spain

PARLIAMENT PASSES SLAVERY ABOLITION ACT
1833
London, England

Images: Alamy (Royal African Company logo, armed Jamaican Maroon, Drumfolk), Getty Images (Jamaican Maroons in jungle)

Identities of slavery

Slavery and involuntary servitude have existed in numerous forms through the centuries

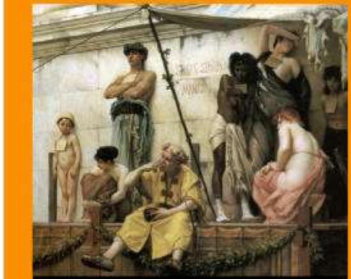
Slavery is, at its most elementary level, the involuntary coercion or detention of an individual to perform some function for the benefit of others. It has taken many names and has been shrouded in circumstance and suspect justification as well.

While some may have offered the dubious argument that slavery actually has benefitted an enslaved people that otherwise were disadvantaged and unable to competently determine their own future, others have contended that the institution was a necessary tool for the good of society. Therefore, varied genres of slavery have emerged across the millennia.

Slavery encompasses those who were simply seized and sold, those who were captured during wartime and made to serve the victors, and those whose families even considered it a privilege to give their children over to the ruling regime for a lifetime of servitude.

Beyond these concepts, during the colonial era, indentured servitude allowed individuals to seek their own fortune after paying for passage to America with a specified period of work, usually seven years, for the benefit of another. Prisoners, paying their supposed debt to society, have often been employed as labourers, while those who have amassed considerable debt and defaulted have, at times, been sentenced into bondage as a result.

Even today, slavery persists. Although chains may not be visible, millions of people, young and old, are held against their will around the world. Human trafficking for the purposes of cheap labour and illicit sex trade flourishes despite the best efforts of government and law enforcement to eradicate the age-old scourge.



This haunting image titled 'The Slave Market' depicts the despair of those sold into bondage

SLAVES SEIZE THE SHIP AMISTAD

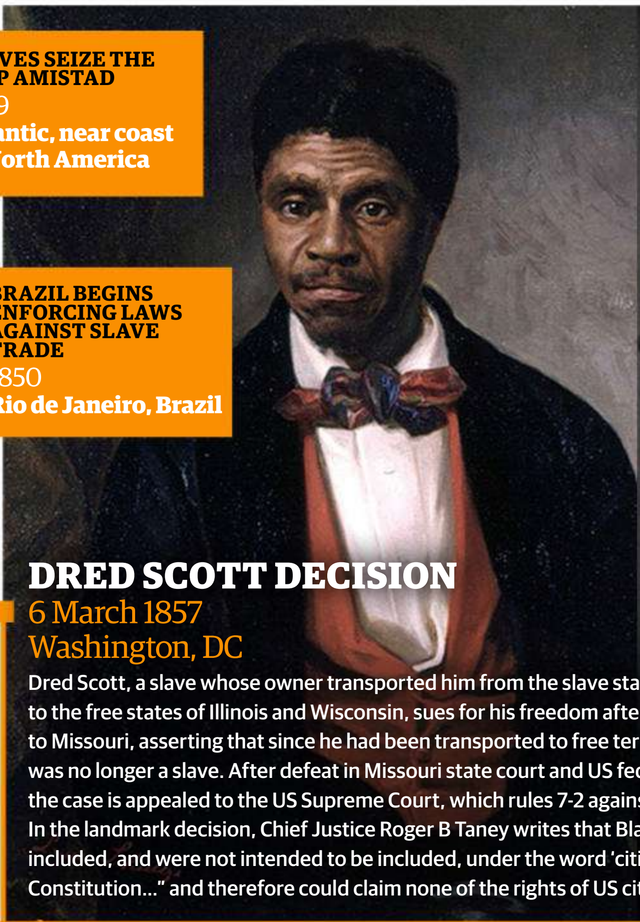
1839

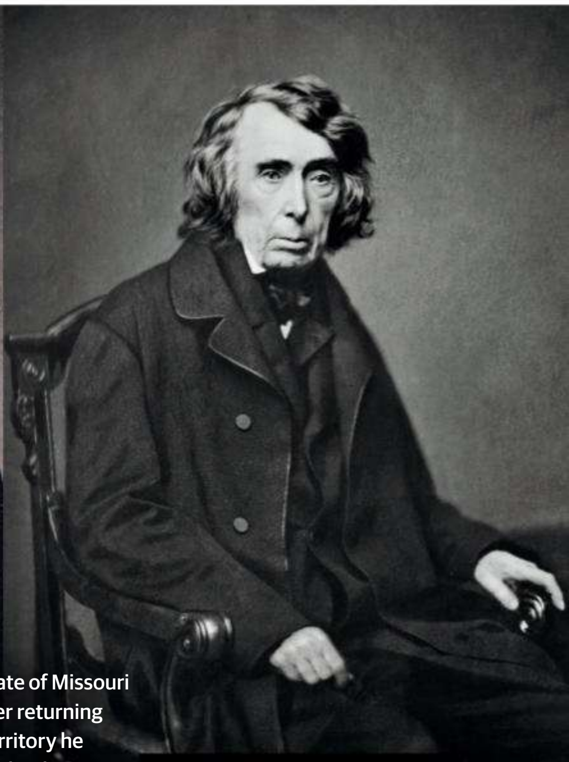
Atlantic, near coast of North America

BRAZIL BEGINS ENFORCING LAWS AGAINST SLAVE TRADE

1850

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil





DRED SCOTT DECISION

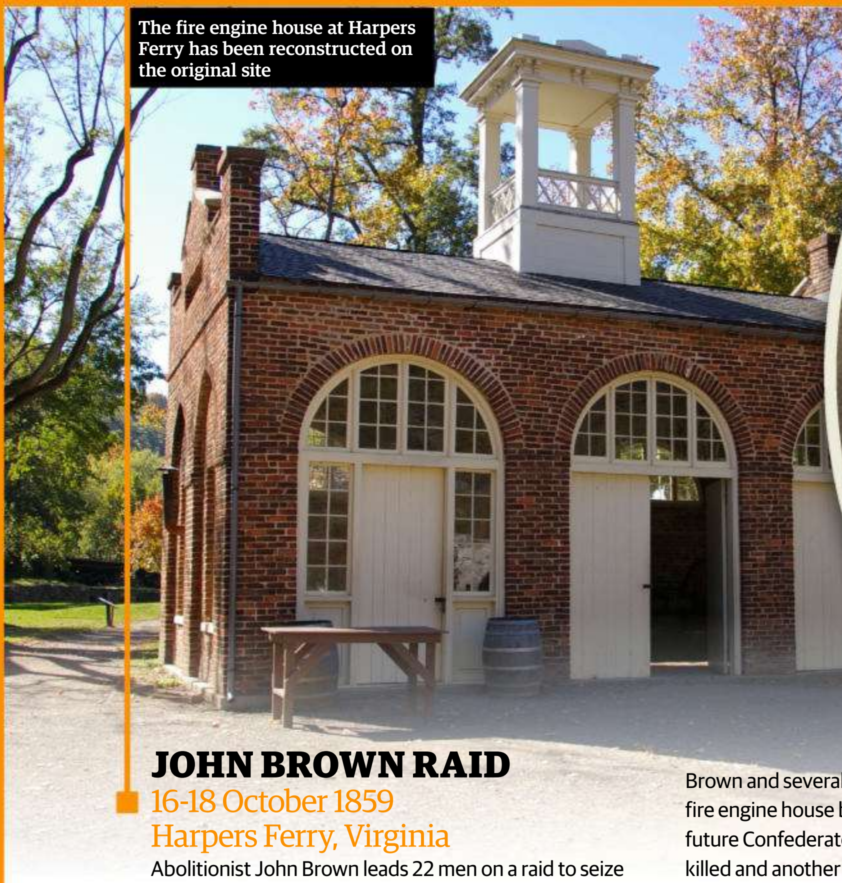
6 March 1857

Washington, DC

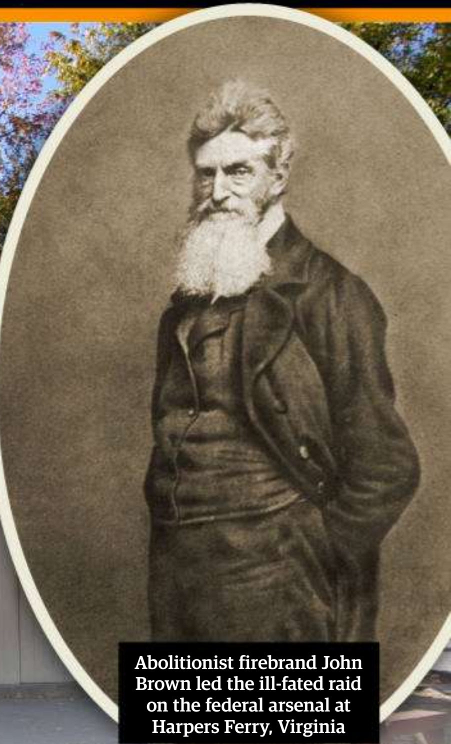
Dred Scott, a slave whose owner transported him from the slave state of Missouri to the free states of Illinois and Wisconsin, sues for his freedom after returning to Missouri, asserting that since he had been transported to free territory he was no longer a slave. After defeat in Missouri state court and US federal court, the case is appealed to the US Supreme Court, which rules 7-2 against Scott. In the landmark decision, Chief Justice Roger B Taney writes that Blacks "are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word 'citizens' in the Constitution…" and therefore could claim none of the rights of US citizens.

LEFT Slave Dred Scott's quest for freedom reached the United States Supreme Court

ABOVE Chief Justice Roger B Taney wrote the majority opinion in the landmark Dred Scott decision



The fire engine house at Harpers Ferry has been reconstructed on the original site



Abolitionist firebrand John Brown led the ill-fated raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia

JOHN BROWN RAID

16-18 October 1859

Harpers Ferry, Virginia

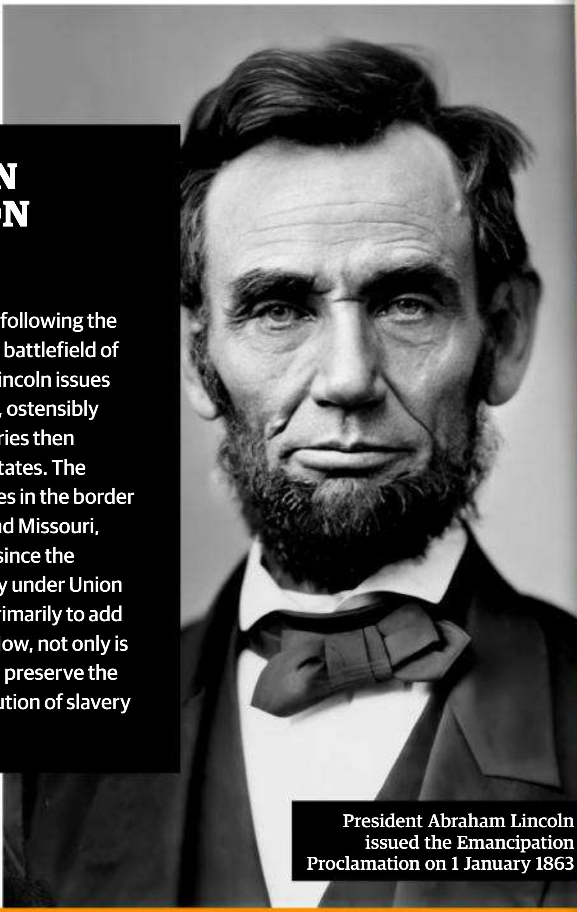
Abolitionist John Brown leads 22 men on a raid to seize the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Previously involved in other acts of anti-slavery related violence,

Brown and several of his men are trapped in the arsenal fire engine house by US Marines under the command of future Confederate General Robert E Lee. One Marine is killed and another wounded, while ten raiders die, seven are captured and five escape. Brown is convicted of treason and executed on 2 December 1859.

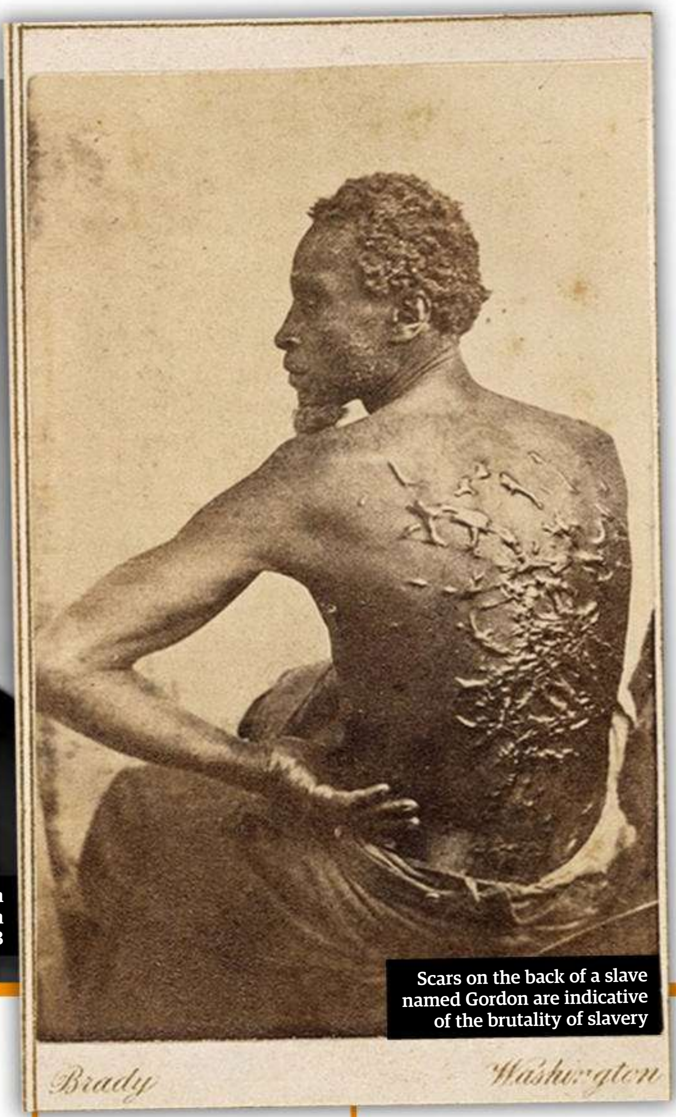
EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

1 January 1863
Washington, DC

In the midst of the Civil War and following the tenuous strategic victory on the battlefield of Antietam, President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, ostensibly freeing the slaves held in territories then in rebellion against the United States. The proclamation does not free slaves in the border states of Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri, which remain in the Union, and since the rebellious territories are not fully under Union control, the document serves primarily to add another dimension to the war. Now, not only is the conflict being prosecuted to preserve the Union, but also to end the institution of slavery in the United States.



President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on 1 January 1863



Scars on the back of a slave named Gordon are indicative of the brutality of slavery

UNITED STATES ABOLISHES SLAVERY

6 December 1865
Washington, DC

The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution is ratified by 27 of the 36 US states, abolishing slavery and involuntary servitude in the country unless as punishment for a crime. The amendment had been initially proposed on 8 April 1864 and passed the Senate by a vote of 38 to 6. However, it failed in the House of Representatives with a tally of 93 in favour and 65 against, 13 votes short of the two-thirds majority required for passage.

JUNETEENTH COMMEMORATES END OF SLAVERY

19 June 1865
United States

PORTUGAL ENDS LAST SLAVE ROUTE TO AMERICAS

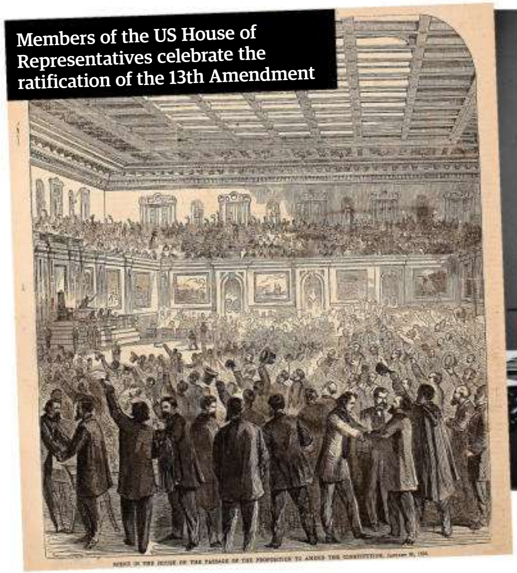
1870
Lisbon, Portugal

BRAZIL BECOMES THE LAST COUNTRY IN THE AMERICAS TO END SLAVERY

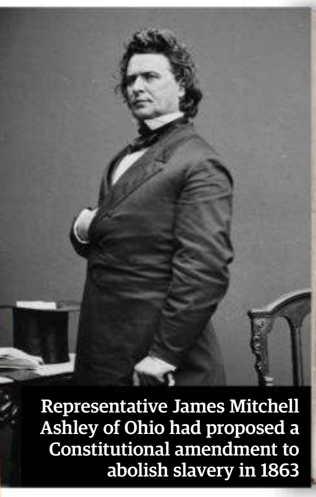
1888
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

MAJOR CONFEDERATE ARMIES SURRENDER, EFFECTIVELY ENDING AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

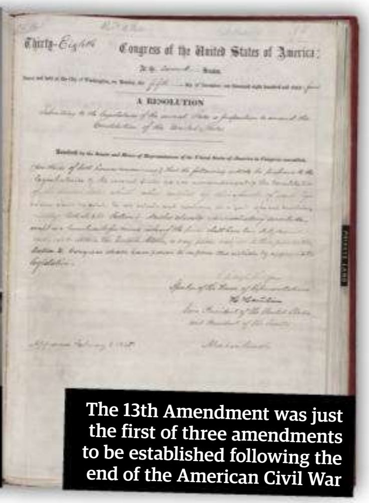
1865
Appomattox Court House Virginia; Bennett Place, Durham, North Carolina



Members of the US House of Representatives celebrate the ratification of the 13th Amendment



Representative James Mitchell Ashley of Ohio had proposed a Constitutional amendment to abolish slavery in 1863



Thirty-Eighth Congress of the United States of America;
A RESOLUTION

The 13th Amendment was just the first of three amendments to be established following the end of the American Civil War

Image: MamaGeek/CC BY 3.0 (John Brown Fort)

SLAVE TRADE FACTS

Revealing some of the shocking statistics behind the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade

SLAVE SHIP'S HUMAN CARGO

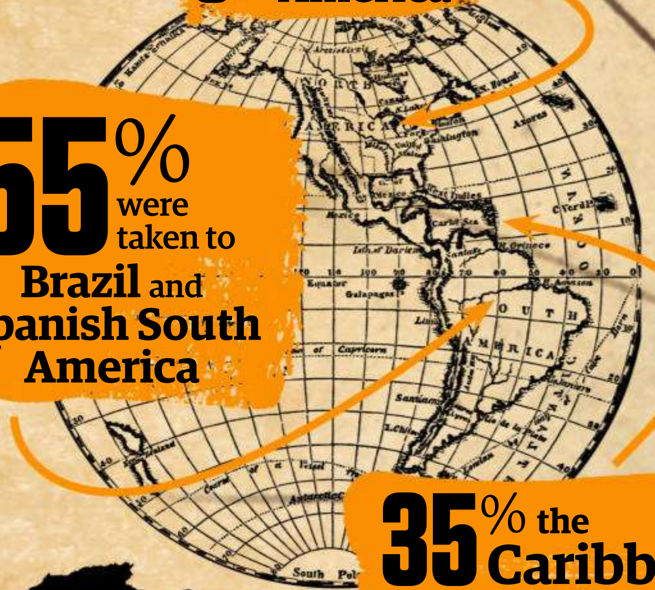
47% men

26% woman

26% children

36,000

slaving expeditions
between
1514-1866



6% North America

55% were taken to **Brazil** and **Spanish South America**

35% the **Caribbean**

80 Days

the length of the journey from **Africa** to the **New World**

UP TO 16%

of **slaves died** during **the Middle Passage**

12.5+

million enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic

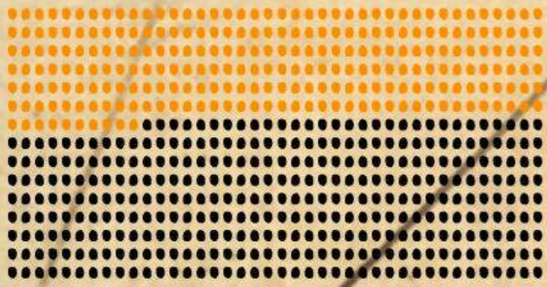
Over **4,000 miles**

the length of the Middle Passage

3.1-3.4

million enslaved people transported by **BRITISH SHIPS**

250-600



SLAVES PER BOAT

$40,000

average cost of a slave

in the American South in today's money

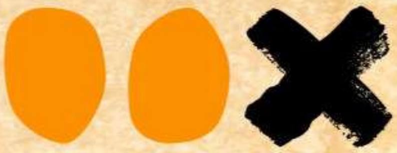
Black population in early America/United States

27,817 in 1700

757,208 in 1790

4,441,830 in 1860

3.9 million of whom were slaves



1/3 of newly arrived slaves **would die within three years**

1/2

of all **enslaved children died** in their first year of life

Mortality rates were **twice as high among enslaved children as among Southern White children**

£20 million

(*£17 billion in today's money)

compensation paid to British slave owners

following abolition in 1833

£0

compensation paid to the enslaved or their descendants since abolition

2015

The year **British taxpayers paid off the last instalment of the bank loan used to compensate slave owners**

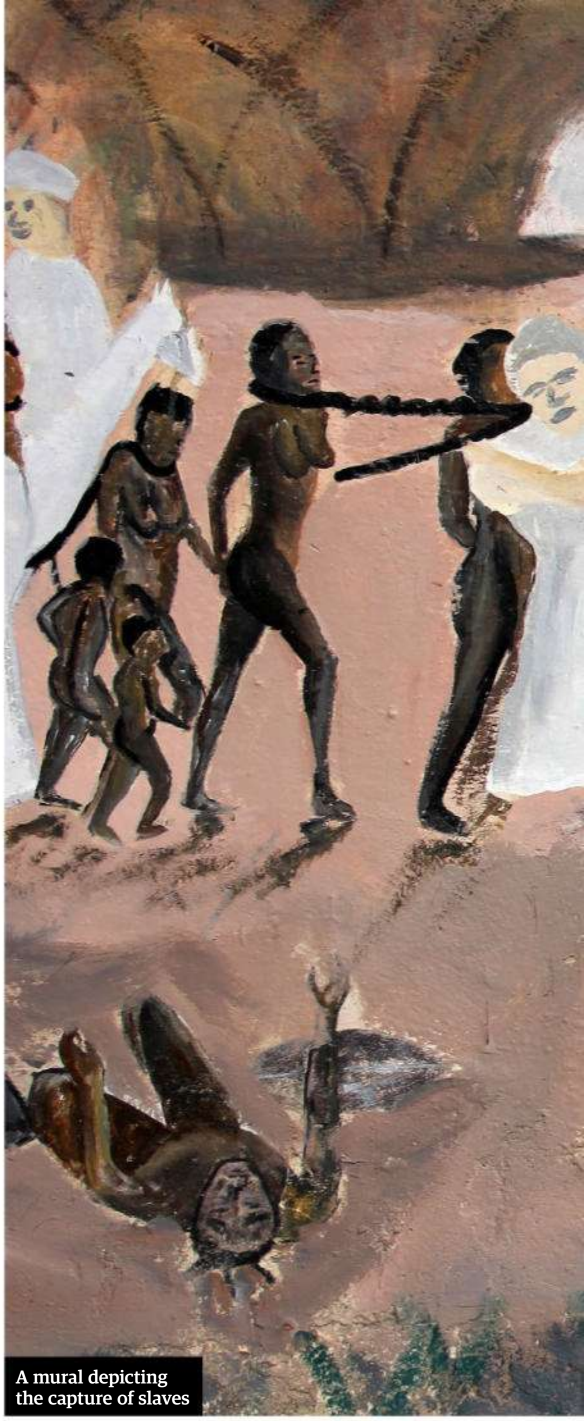
Images: Getty Images, Alamy (coffin)

Impact of slavery

What became of those left behind, the family members and village-mates of the kidnapped enslaved who were shipped across the Atlantic?

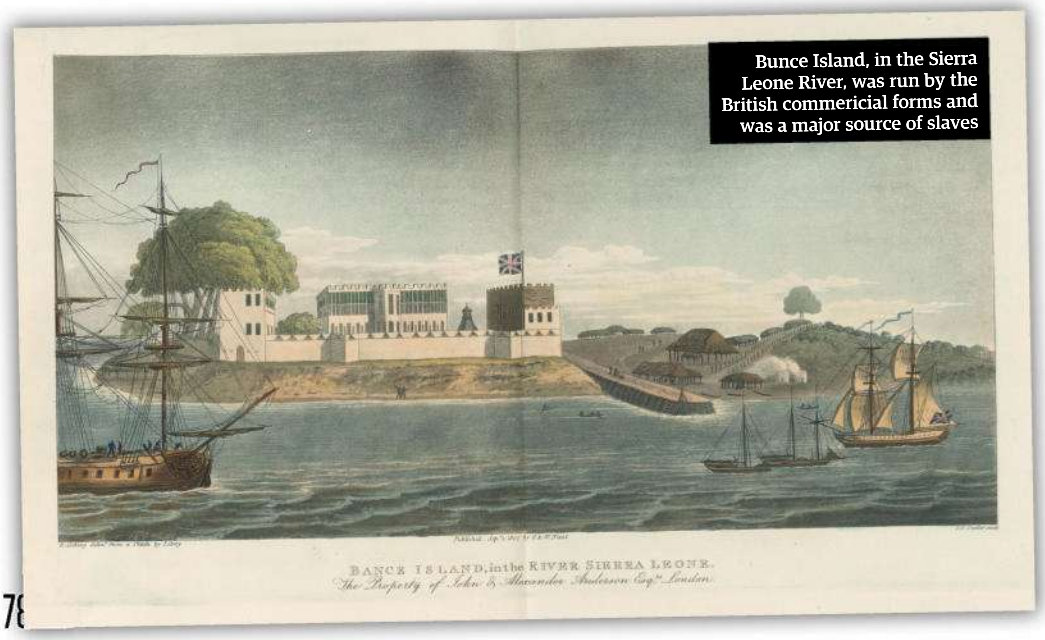
It is clear to many the impact that the slave trade had for Europe and the Americas, helping them to grow rich and to finance the Industrial Revolution. In Europe, a middle class began to emerge, enjoying greater leisure time, drinking tea and coffee with sugar, indulging in chocolate, exotic spices, fabrics and stories of travel and adventure in foreign lands. In the Caribbean and Americas, we know that Indigenous people experienced unspeakable decimation and disease, almost wiped out as lush landscapes were broken into plantation land upon which African slaves harvested sugar, cotton, tobacco, rice and many other crops that were quickly becoming essentials in Europe. But the story that is less well known, barely touched upon in comparison even to the lives of slaves once they made landfall overseas, is what was happening during this time in Africa while human beings were stolen on a daily basis.

West Africa had a rich history before European slavers arrived, with a complex political, economic, linguistic and cultural landscape. Just like in Europe during this period, the balance of power was constantly changing. Wars were fought, kingdoms and dynasties toppled, city-states destroyed as new ones emerged. It is difficult to even categorise West Africa as a singular place, so diverse was it. Indeed, West Africans had been trading with Europe for centuries, via merchants in North Africa. The first European traders to set foot on African land were the Portuguese in the 15th century. Other European powers quickly began to follow.



A mural depicting the capture of slaves

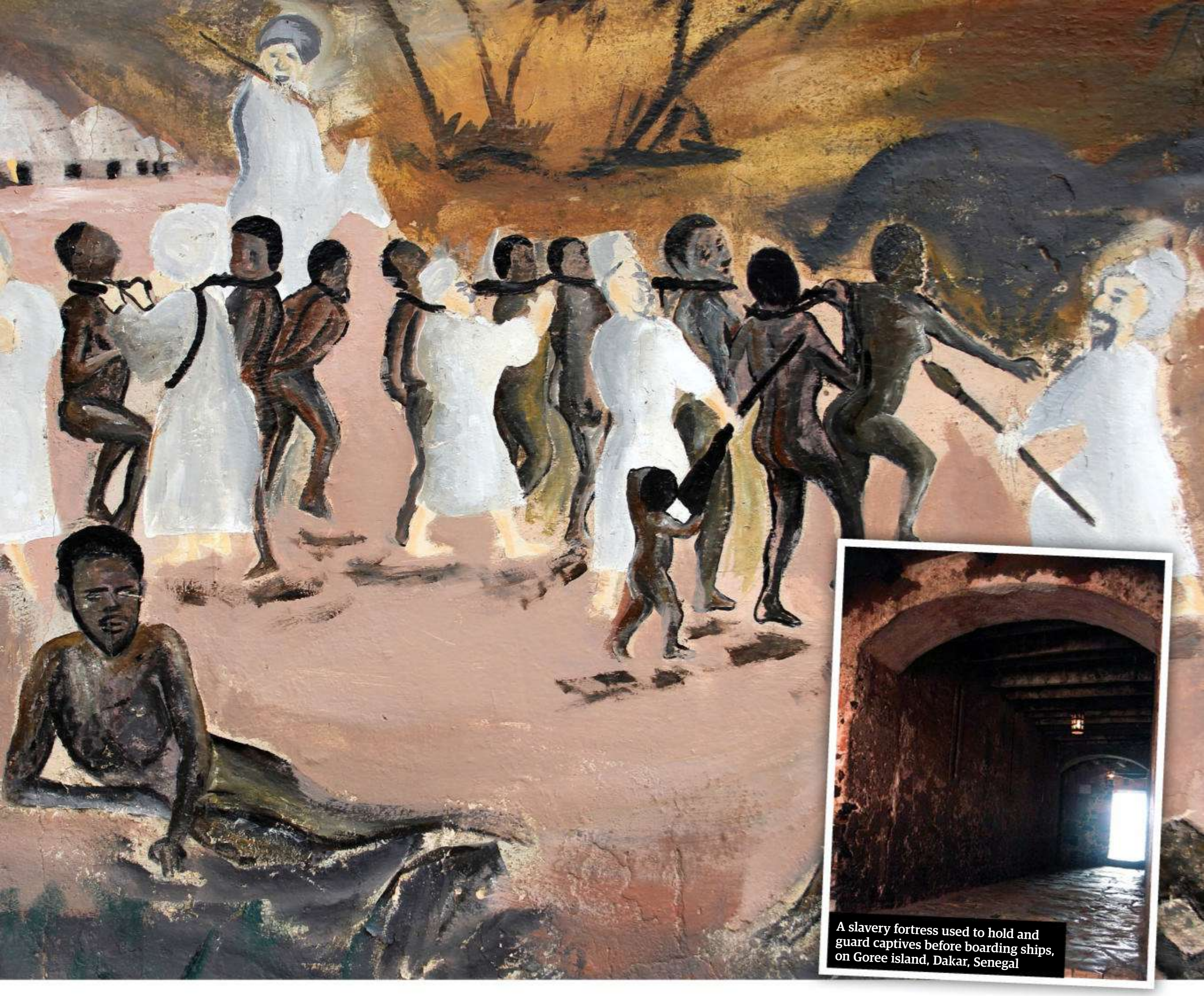
There were four simultaneous slave trades occurring across Africa at this time. The Trans-Saharan trade saw people taken from the south, up through the Sahara Desert, and sold in Northern Africa. The Red Sea trade took people from inland and shipped them to the Middle East and India. And the Indian Ocean trade included the sale of East Africans to the Middle East, India and plantation islands across the Indian Ocean.


BANCE ISLAND, in the RIVER SIERRA LEONE.
The Property of John & Alexander Anderson Esqrs London.

Bunce Island, in the Sierra Leone River, was run by the British commericial forms and was a major source of slaves

The Transatlantic slave trade, however, was, without a doubt, the most expansive, populous, systemic and brutal of all. It marked a significant expansion of the African slave system from anything that had been seen before on the continent, as economies and ways of life began to be structured around it. It was the largest long-distance coerced migration in history.

Before the slave trade became destructive and toxic, West African ports were dynamic and diverse marketplaces with goods sold from all over the world. Europeans wanted gold, ivory and spices – mainly pepper. They kidnapped and traded Africans from the beginning, but it remained a small, fringe trade until the 17th century, when the demand for gold in Europe


A slavery fortress used to hold and guard captives before boarding ships, on Goree island, Dakar, Senegal

slowed. The slave trade boomed, replacing gold as the focus of commerce and becoming the dominant trade in the region. The impacts that this had on West Africa, and indeed the continent of Africa, as well as Europe and the Americas, is truly immense.

> “A mentality emerged in which people felt they must either take or be taken”

Sophisticated networks of trading alliances collected groups of people for sale. Often, these were people kidnapped or captured as prisoners of war in battle, or they were convicts sold away as punishment for crimes or to pay off debt. One of the main commodities that the Europeans sold in return for slaves was guns and firearms.

The result of injecting metal guns and weapons into African society was devastating. Communities began using them as self-defence against both European slave traders and other African tribes and villages, who may attempt to wage war or steal their villagers to sell as slaves. A vicious cycle emerged, in which West Africans needed guns to prevent their village members from being captured and sold, but in order to buy guns, they needed to sell slaves. Thus, villages were constantly violently preying on and attacking one another to steal human beings. Much blood was shed.

Some kingdoms and city-states were decimated as a result of this. Others, like the Asante and Dahomey, grew rich and powerful. In Dahomey, which emerged around 1600, raiding for slaves was a way of life, inherent in the very founding of the state by the armed elite. This created huge rivalries and tensions between different states, and constant war reduced the possibility of political stability emerging. Ethnic fractionalisation that continues to this day almost certainly has its roots in this period.

The slave trade was not a planned strategy to impoverish the continent; it was the result of centuries of participation in the trade on all sides. It is difficult and complex to try and understand the extent to which African societies were complicit in the slave trade and contributed to the sale and torture of human beings. There is much evidence to suggest that many African states, such as Angola, strongly resisted becoming involved in the economic system of trading in slaves. Africans often damaged slaving vessels and rose up in revolt and rebellion against the system.

However, as the trade eclipsed every other in value, it became impossible not to. It was either sell slaves or get left behind. Those that didn’t join in would become impoverished. A mentality emerged in which people felt they must either take or be taken. With a whole economic system built on the sale of human flesh, it is less a question of

Images: Seyllou Diallo/AFP via Getty Images (Goree island), Alamy (Bance Island, mural)

complicity than of need and survival, of ordinary people and everyday lives turning as small cogs in an epic system.

But it seems to be that African societies without a state or government were less prone to violence and raiding. Those with chiefs and a prominent elite would be targeted by the Europeans and influenced, offered rewards and wealth in return for slaves. Their sons were sent to Europe to study, and the nature of statehood changed. So much so, at the time of abolition, many African chiefs were dismayed. They did not wish to see the end of an industry that was their main function and source of wealth. This is one of the reasons that the Europeans were so keen to find alternative goods to trade in Africa other than slaves after abolition, particularly oil. It would allow them to keep African chiefs in a state of indebtedness and dependency. Africans were not so much partners, but servants and facilitators of the European slave trade.

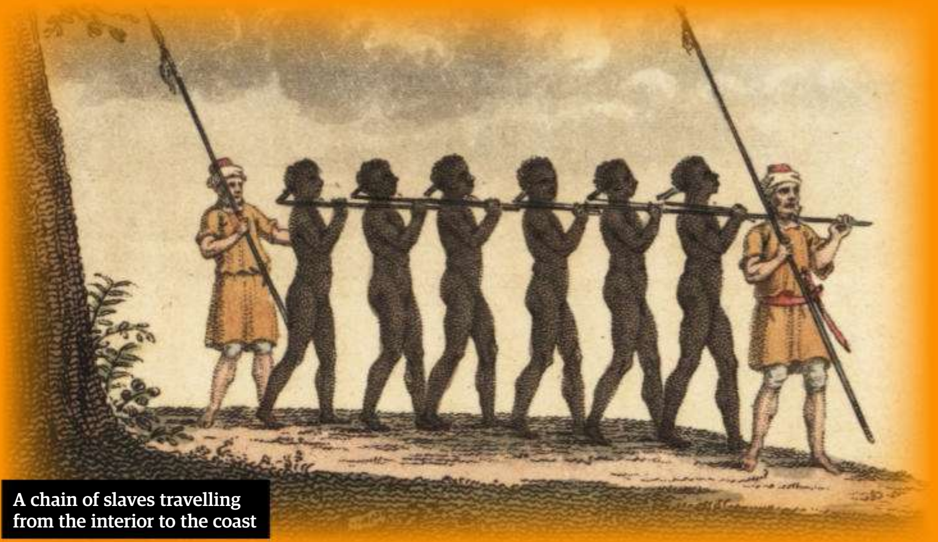
> “African states became deeply dependent on selling human beings”

The slave trade fundamentally changed the demographic landscape of many parts of West Africa. Sometimes, entire villages were stolen or killed. Whole areas were practically emptied of their human presence. Scholars have determined that the region faced a sustained and consistent depopulation. According to historian Patrick Manning, by 1850, Africa's population was only half of what it would have been had the slave trade never taken place. This was compounded by deaths caused by diseases brought in by European imperialists such as syphilis, smallpox, typhus and tuberculosis, to which Africans had little to no immune resistance having never encountered such illnesses before.

This depopulation and instability created a major global imbalance in the ability of West Africa to recover from the pilfering and plundering of its population. Once a thriving economic centre, West Africa was being stripped dry, and the profits were setting Europe far ahead economically, where before Europe had been on a similar footing, if not even less economically developed. The African economic model at the time was labour and agriculture intensive, and required a large number of people to work the land. It simply could not thrive under so great a population loss, nor the reallocation of resources away from agriculture and towards slave raiding.

Evidence shows a relationship between areas in which greater numbers of people were taken

ALTERED SOCIETIES: GENDER, CLASS AND ETHNICITY



A chain of slaves travelling from the interior to the coast

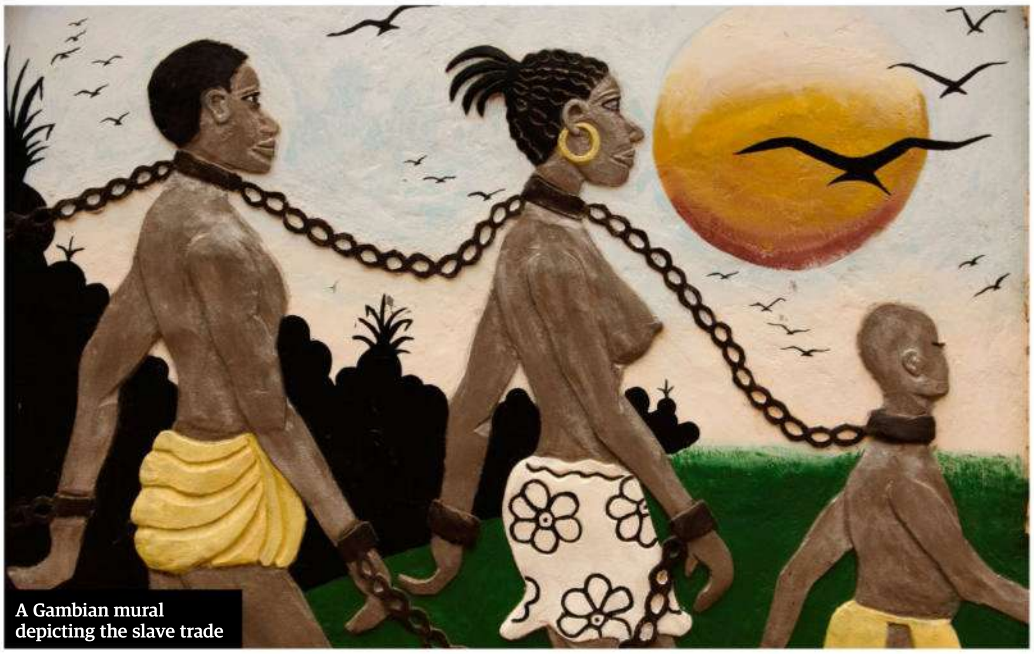
In places where only some were taken, a gender imbalance was created. More men were kidnapped, leaving behind women, who were seen as less useful. They remained to keep the village running, and came under huge pressure to rebuild, care for and support their villages.

But there were suddenly too many women and not enough men to marry, and so in some societies, men began to take multiple wives in a practice known as polygyny. Tensions and instability emerged with these new lifestyles, and this practice actually decreased the fertility of women, compounding population stagnation even further.

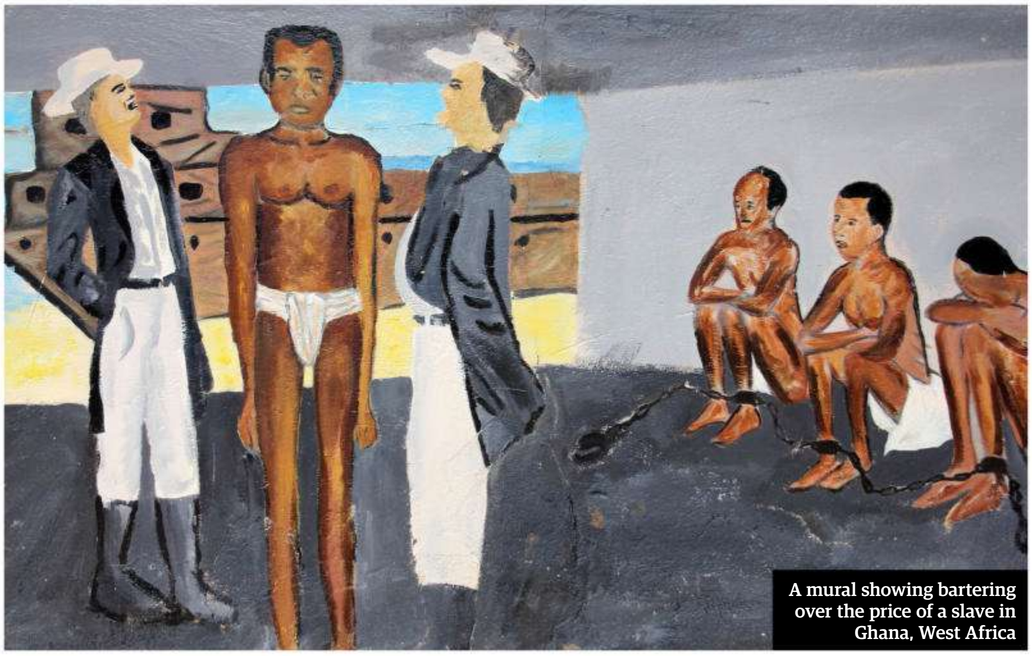
It wasn't only women whose roles were changing and developing as a result of the trade; a new class of 'merchant princes' found they could become rich. The children of chiefs and kings, many of whom had either been granted a European education or were of mixed race and could speak European languages, discovered a new niche.

Given their ambiguous place in society – Black but wealthy, educated and somewhat respected by the White men – these merchant princes could act as intermediaries and army commanders aiding the Europeans, and extract sizeable profits for themselves. Indeed, the slave trade opened up a wealth of new employment opportunities at all levels, with workers needed as porters, interpreters, guards, soldiers and peddlers.

But while this may seem like a positive outcome for the African peoples, in reality these jobs were only available for the privileged. Only a small number of African villagers were involved directly in servicing the trade. And yet the impact and scale of human loss inflicted on peaceful and innocent villagers is immense and unimaginable.



A Gambian mural depicting the slave trade



A mural showing bartering over the price of a slave in Ghana, West Africa

as slaves, and lower rates of economic and social development, according to typical outward or Western markers of development. For instance, lower literacy rates still exist in Nigeria and Ghana, where the slave trade was particularly prolific. Other studies show that, ironically, areas of West Africa with particularly rugged and inaccessible terrains today perform better economically than those that are open or coastal. Enclosed and remote inland areas were more difficult to raid for slaves, and thus had lower rates of depopulation as the terrain hindered trade and protected vulnerable communities. Interestingly, everywhere else in the world, 'rugged' regions are generally more economically impoverished, but in Africa, the phenomenon is undoubtedly linked in some part to the history of slavery.

It was also easier to raid and kidnap slaves when the weather was cooler, as enslaved people were less likely to die of heatstroke, exhaustion or other diseases, and less money had to be spent to keep them alive. Colder areas were more likely to see many people captured and sold. New data analysing weather patterns at the peak of the slave trade show that areas with colder weather during those years are the poorest today. It seems that once again depopulation due to the slave trade continues to have a negative effect on modern African economies even today.

African states became deeply dependent on selling human beings and buying guns for survival. Although Africa did not experience official or direct colonial rule on the ground until the 1860s, the slave trade can be seen as imperial rule by commerce, taking its inceptions back to the 16th century. The slow impoverishing of Africa in these years paved a convenient way for the colonial 'Scramble for Africa' that was to follow after slavery was finally abolished.

Coastal societies saw the greatest change, as previously quiet fishing and salt-producing villages suddenly saw the building of factories, forts and holding prisons and new languages spoken. A region that once traded primarily overland was now part of growing sea routes and networks, and small villages became globally recognised ports.

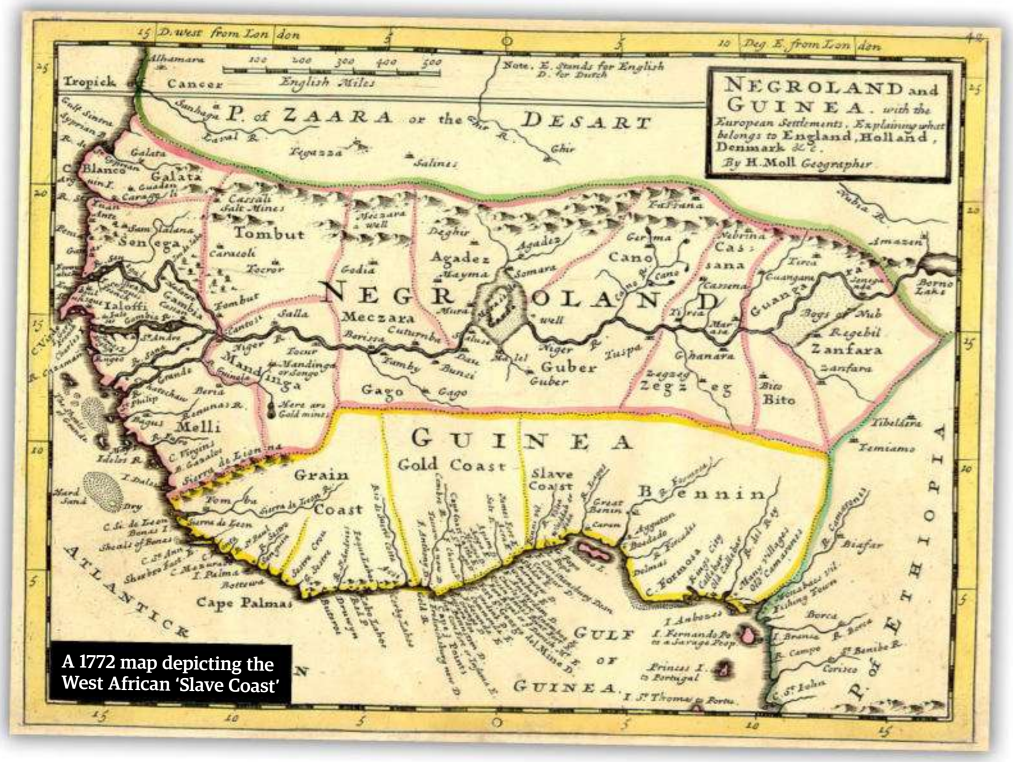
Of course, we cannot say that 500 years' worth of change in West Africa is attributable to the slave trade; change occurs as part of slow and complex processes in every society. Moreover, these impacts were not uniform. West Africa is a vast region, almost as large as the US, and some places were largely uninvolved with Europeans. One reason the impact of the slave trade in West Africa has been explored in so little depth compared to other places is the lack of reliable statistical evidence. Another reason is simple historical amnesia. Very few people have thought it a worthy subject to address.

And yet a major lasting impact is, of course, the construction of Black peoples in the Western imagination as inferior, backwards and worthy of enslavement. Racism as we know it today certainly did not begin with the slave trade: racialised thinking and classing people on the bases of physical characteristics has a long history. However, the role of a racial characterisation of Black people in justifying and sustaining the legality of slavery, was crucial.

As the successful West African economic landscape fell further and further into disrepair as a result of all that was happening, Europeans chose to interpret this as evidence of African savagery, backwardness and an inability to function successfully in contrast to the West. They interpreted Europe's enrichment from enslavement and extraction as proof of their superiority, while Africa remained outside of history and progress.

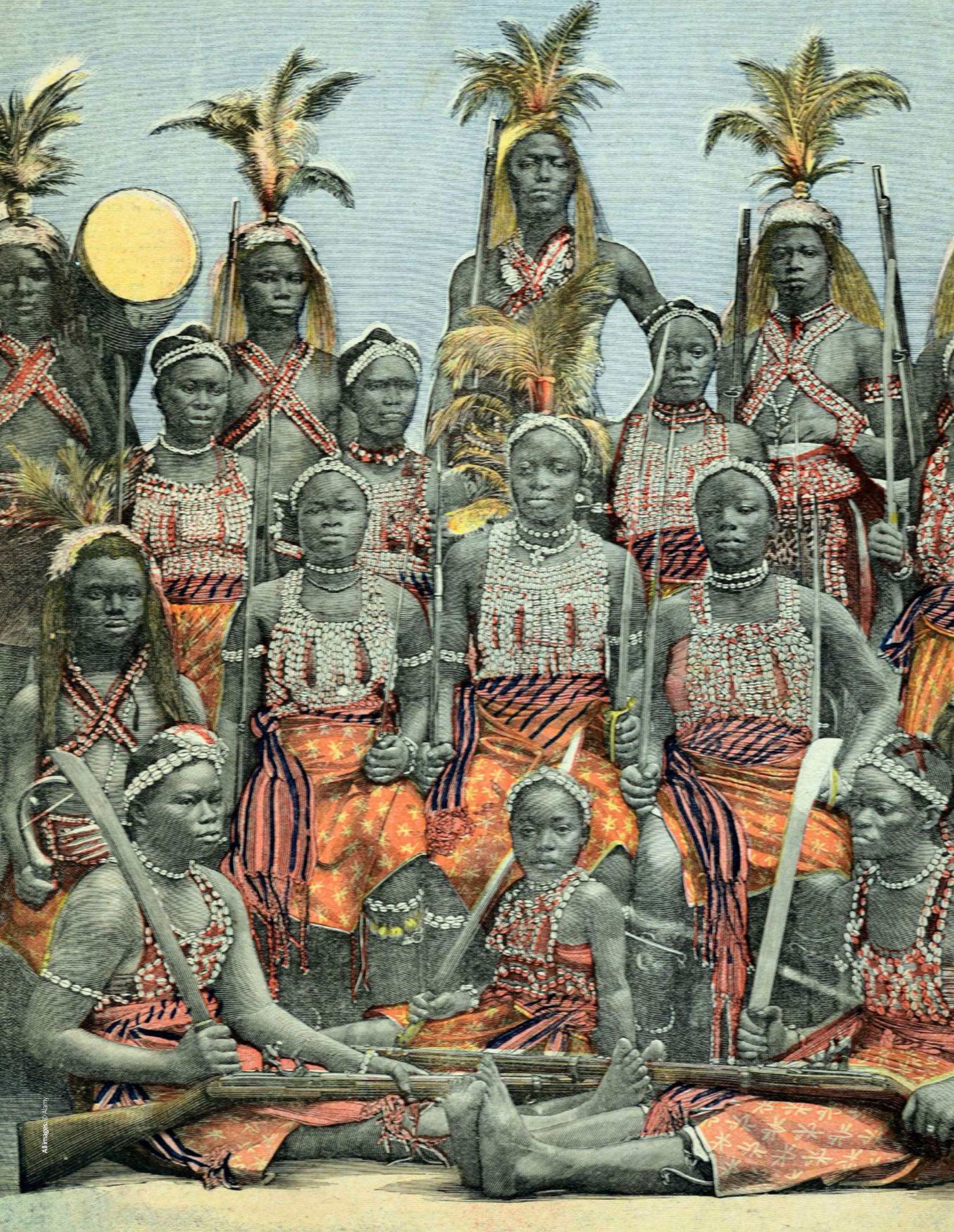
Over the years, it became natural to believe that Africa and its people have made no major contributions to history, no crowning achievements, no role in shaping our modern world. It was attributed to Africans' innate nature, rather than the path that history took. This unjust representation may be the biggest impact of all.

And what of the emotional toll? The trauma and loss experienced by people living in constant fear for centuries is likely to have greatly negatively impacted the overall mental health of the region, diminishing productivity and motivation. This is a trauma that will have been inherited through the generations. Studies and explorations of West African art and literature shows that the constant fear of kidnap, survivor's guilt and the importance placed on community and travelling in groups is still prevalent within the public consciousness of the region. The past endures and clues of this can be found in cultural forms, even if it is not preserved in written historical documents.

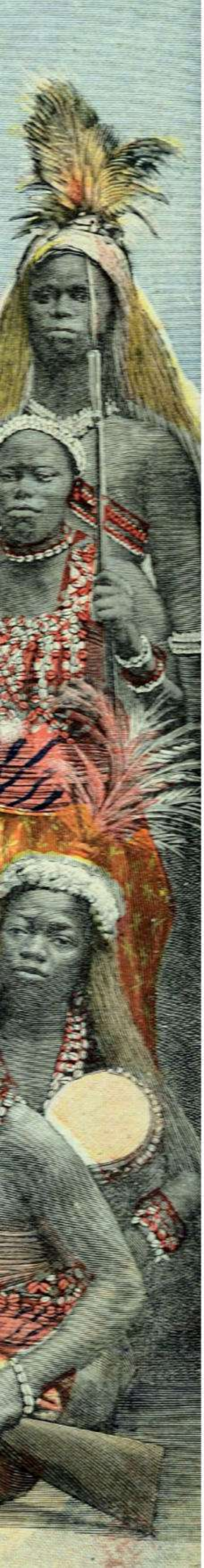

NEGROLAND and GUINEA. with the European Settlements, Explaining what belongs to England, Holland, Denmark &c. By H.Moll Geographer
D. west from London
Deg. E. from London
English Miles
Note. E. Stands for English D. for Dutch
Tropick of Cancer
P. of ZAARA or the DESART
Tombut
NEGROLAND
GUINEA
Grain Coast
Gold Coast
Slave Coast
Bennin
Melli
Agadez
Zanfara
ATLANTICK
GULF OF GUINEA
ETHIOPIA

A 1772 map depicting the West African 'Slave Coast'

Images: Alamy



All images: © Alamy



Beware the Mino

Who were the 'Dahomey Amazon' warriors who struck fear into the hearts of men?

The Mino warriors were brave and ruthless. A formidable all-female military regiment in the Kingdom of Dahomey, West Africa (modern-day Benin), these women struck fear into the hearts of their enemies and those who observed them.

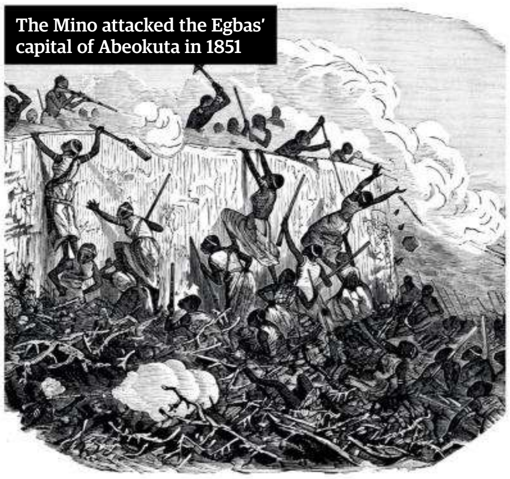
There are a couple of different stories regarding the founding of the kingdom, with one tradition claiming that it was founded around 1625 by Do-Aklin. Likewise, there are several theories about the origins of the Mino warriors themselves, stories that have been passed down either through oral history or taken from the written sources of contemporary European colonists. These Europeans referred to the Mino as the 'Dahomey Amazons', taking the name from the race of women warriors in Greek mythology. However, the term 'Mino', the word for 'our mothers' in their native Fon language, is used to refer to these women today.

> **"Their training was also designed to expose them to death and to ensure that they could kill without hesitation"**

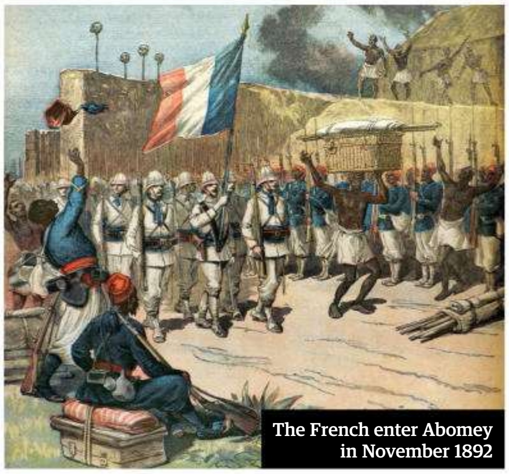
It is frequently claimed that the Mino was formed when women became bodyguards to either King Houegbadja or to his younger son, King Agaja, sometime during the 17th century. Women were an ideal choice to serve as bodyguards because men were not permitted in the royal palace with the king at night. The decision to train female soldiers may have also been inspired by the Gbeto, the female warriors who hunted elephants. Another theory argues that the Mino was established during Agaja's war against the Oyo Empire, in which his army contained women dressed as male warriors at the back.

However, oral history suggests that Houegbadja's daughter Tassi Hangbe, who briefly ruled Dahomey after the death of her twin brother King Akaba, may have created the all-female unit before she was deposed by Agaja. Clearly, the origins of the Mino are disputed, but we do know that they were integrated into the army by King Gezo, who ruled Dahomey from 1818 to 1858. It was during his reign that around half of the kingdom's armed forces were comprised of the Mino alone.

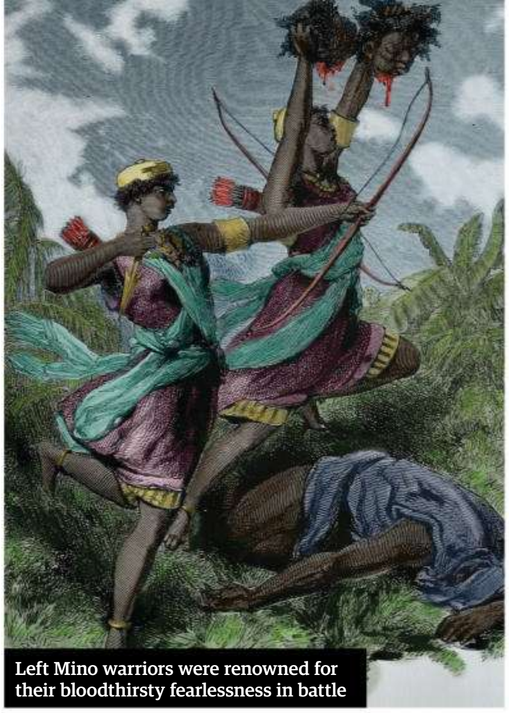
One of the reasons why women were likely recruited as soldiers was because of the lack of men available to join the army. Not only had numerous men been lost in previous



The Mino attacked the Egbas' capital of Abeokuta in 1851



The French enter Abomey in November 1892



Left Mino warriors were renowned for their bloodthirsty fearlessness in battle

> “As ferocious as the Mino were, they were unable to match the French in terms of weaponry and sheer numbers”

conflicts, but the economy of Dahomey relied heavily on the slave trade. Lots of men were sold off as slaves to European traders, so it became necessary to train women as soldiers to fill the gap.

In fact, Queen Victoria sent Royal Navy Captain Frederick E Forbes to Dahomey twice, in 1849 and 1850, in an attempt to persuade King Gezo to stop participating in the slave trade. Forbes was ultimately unsuccessful, although he did write an account of his time in Dahomey that provides one of the insights we have into the Mino warriors.

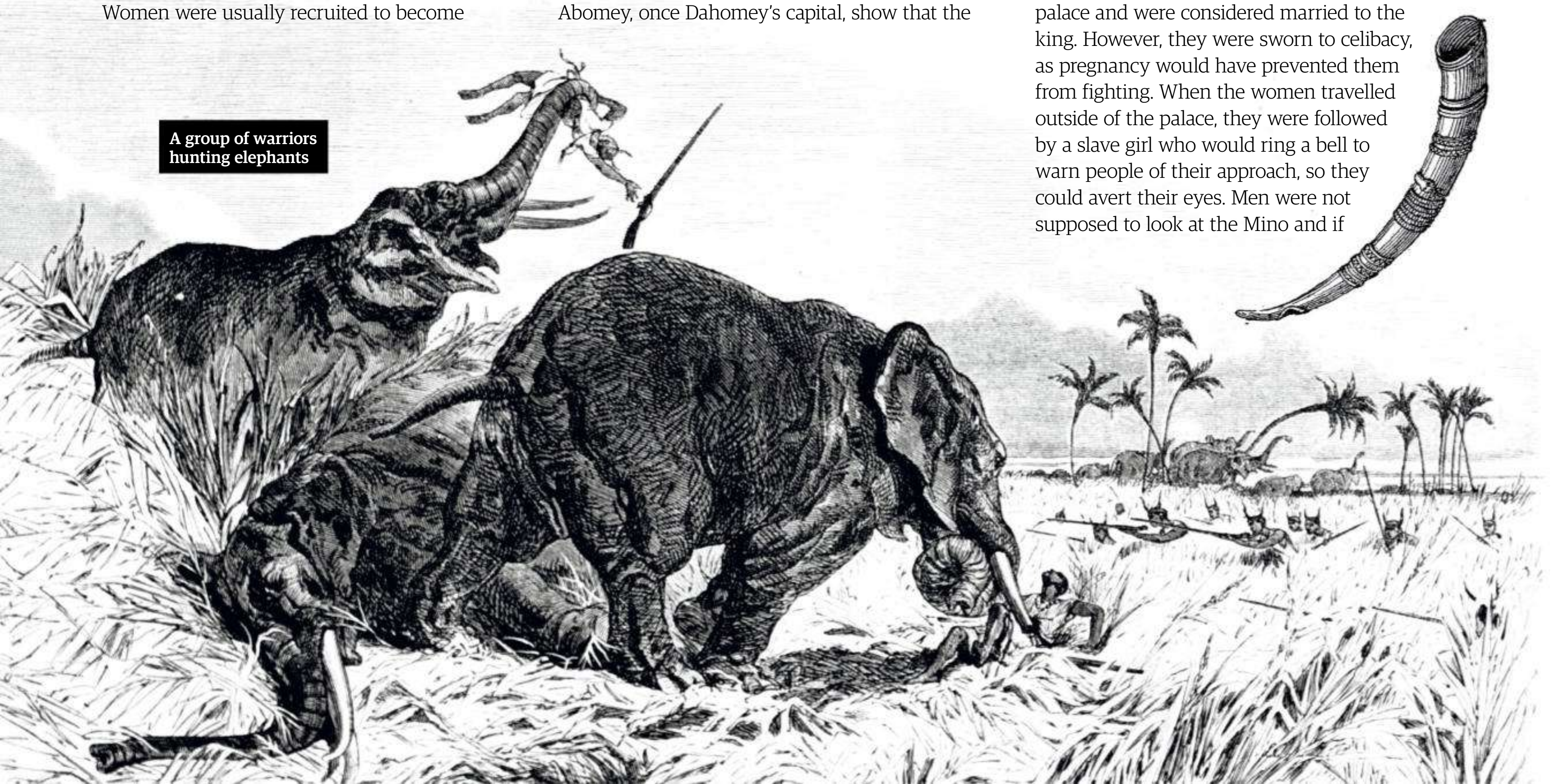
Women were usually recruited to become soldiers for the Mino as teenagers. Many of them chose to join the regiment voluntarily but, sometimes, girls and women were sent to join the Mino by their fathers or even their husbands for being too unruly or headstrong. And it was not just women of the Fon who joined the Mino - female prisoners of war and girls who were seized during village raids were also trained.

As part of their training, the Mino took part in a series of drills and weapons training - the surviving bas-reliefs on the royal palaces in Abomey, once Dahomey's capital, show that the women used weapons such as machetes, clubs and muskets. To build their endurance, trainee warriors would climb a wall covered in thorns over and over again, until they could no longer feel the pain.

Their training was also designed to expose them to death and to ensure that they could kill without hesitation. In a test designed to assess their capacity for cold-blooded brutality, the recruits had to lift prisoners of war, tied up and unable to escape, above their heads and drop them from a height that would instantly result in their death.

In December 1889, French naval officer Jean Bayol wrote an account of a teenage recruit undergoing a similar test, in which a prisoner sat tied up in a basked was brought in front of her. According to Bayol, she “walked jauntily up, swung her sword three times with both hands, then calmly cut the last flesh that attached the head to the trunk… She then squeezed the blood off her weapon and swallowed it”.

The Mino lived within the walls of the royal palace and were considered married to the king. However, they were sworn to celibacy, as pregnancy would have prevented them from fighting. When the women travelled outside of the palace, they were followed by a slave girl who would ring a bell to warn people of their approach, so they could avert their eyes. Men were not supposed to look at the Mino and if



A group of warriors hunting elephants

they dared to touch one, they would be sentenced to death.

The Mino comprised of different units, including the riflewomen, the reapers, the archers, the gunners and the huntresses, with the latter inspired by the Gbeto. Each of these units had their own uniforms, battle songs and dances, which they would also perform during parades for the king.

Although their military prowess is the focus of most attention, these women also had a political role too. They participated in the Grand Council and debated policy, in particular speaking against Dahomey's continued involvement with the slave trade. Ultimately, being a Mino warrior offered these women a form of independence, something that was not available to other, ordinary women in the kingdom.

Of course, the Mino participated in many battles. For example, in 1727, during the reign of King Agaja, their involvement helped Dahomey conquer and annex the Kingdom of Whydah. They notably fought during the battle at Abeokuta against the Egba in 1851, to capture people who could then be sold as slaves. They were led by Seh-Dong-Hong-Beh, who commanded an army consisting of 6,000 Mino warriors.

These warrior women were determined to be better than the men and, devoted to their king, they would fight to the death rather than accept defeat. Indeed, European sources claimed that the Mino were a lot braver than their male counterparts, with Forbes stating, "what the males do, the amazons will endeavour to surpass."

The Mino proved this during the first Franco-Dahomean War in 1890 and the Second Franco-Dahomean War from 1892 to 1894. Africa was carved up among the European powers and the United States at the Conference of Berlin of 1884-85, which excluded African leaders and their people. The conference legitimised and formalised the European colonisation of the African continent, with France becoming the dominant colonial power in West Africa.

France had already established commercial treaties with King Gezo, which allowed them to place traders and missionaries in Whydah and the port of Cotonou. However, this partnership began to turn sour when France gave the kingdom of Porto-Novo, a Dahomean tributary, protection against the British in 1863. King Glele, Gezo's son who succeeded him in 1858, resented French involvement in Porto-Novo, as well as France's increasing claims to Cotonou.

Glele died in 1889 and he was succeeded by his son, King Béhanzin, who believed that the French were compromising his own sovereignty. The situation reached a boiling point in March 1890, and the First Franco-Dahomean War began when Behanzin ordered his army to attack the French at Cotonou. The Mino warriors were able to enter the protected forts and engage the French soldiers in hand-to-hand combat, reportedly decapitating some of them. Meanwhile, some of the Mino warriors were impaled in turn by French bayonets.

As ferocious as the Mino were, they were unable to match the French in terms of weaponry and sheer numbers. The series of attacks by Dahomey failed and by October, Béhanzin was forced to cede Cotonou to the French and accept Porto-Novo as a French protectorate. Nevertheless, the king quickly began to re-arm his soldiers with modern weapons with the expectation of confronting the French again. The Mino being equipped with Winchester rifles.

Two years after the war ended, the Second French-Dahomean War broke out when Dahomey attacked villages in the Ouémé Valley, where the French had territorial claims. France declared war and a series of battles ensued as their troops moved closer to the capital of Abomey. The Mino were on the frontline, and in the final battle at Cana in November 1892 they fought the French with everything they had. However, it was not enough and after two days they were forced to withdraw, with Abomey falling to the French.

The fall of Abomey marked the end of the Kingdom of Dahomey, which was subsequently incorporated into French West Africa. Béhanzin chose to burn all of the royal palaces, leaving them in ruins, before fleeing northwards. He finally surrendered himself to the French in 1894 and was exiled to Martinique, bringing the Second Franco-Dahomean War to an official end.

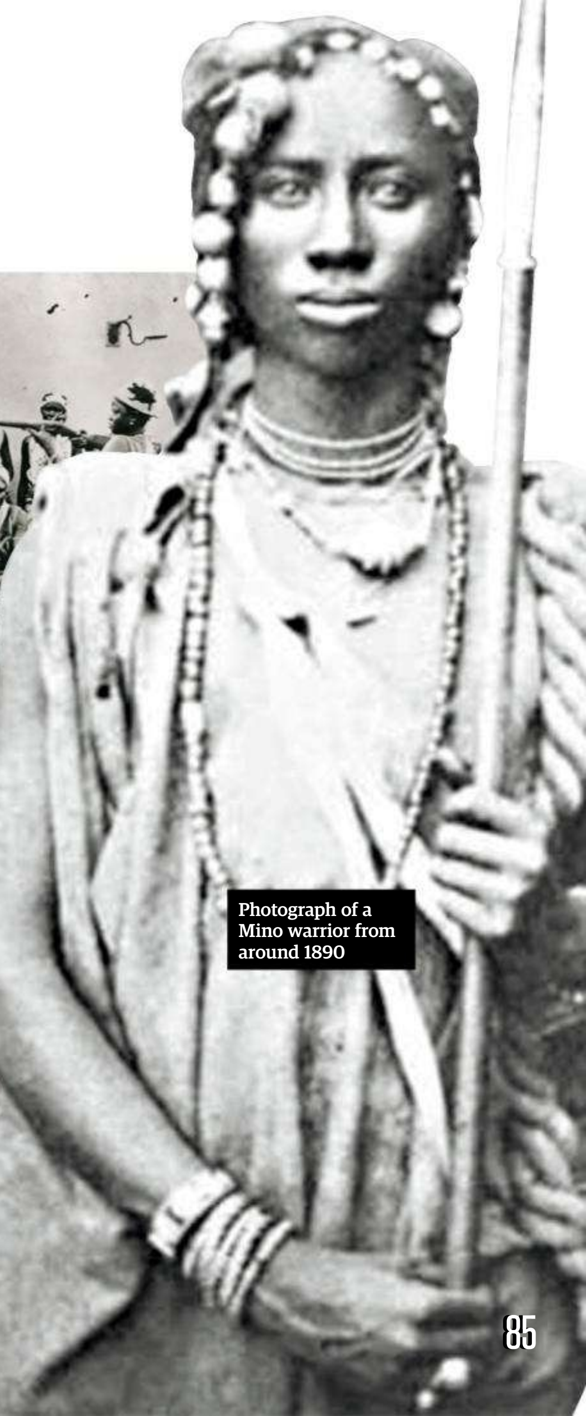
The Mino was disbanded with the collapse of Dahomey. Although the regiment ceased to exist, oral tradition suggests that some of the women continued to secretly protect Agoli-Agbo, Béhanzin's brother. He had been given the throne by the French in return for agreeing to Dahomey's surrender, remaining as king until France took direct control in 1900.

Even though the Mino came to an end over a century ago, interest in their lives has grown in recent years, as comparisons have been drawn between them and the Dora Milaje, the all-female bodyguards and warriors who serve the character Black Panther, in the Marvel Comics. More importantly, however, the Mino traditions – including their songs, dances and legends – are still being kept alive by their female descendants today, ensuring that their legacy lives on.

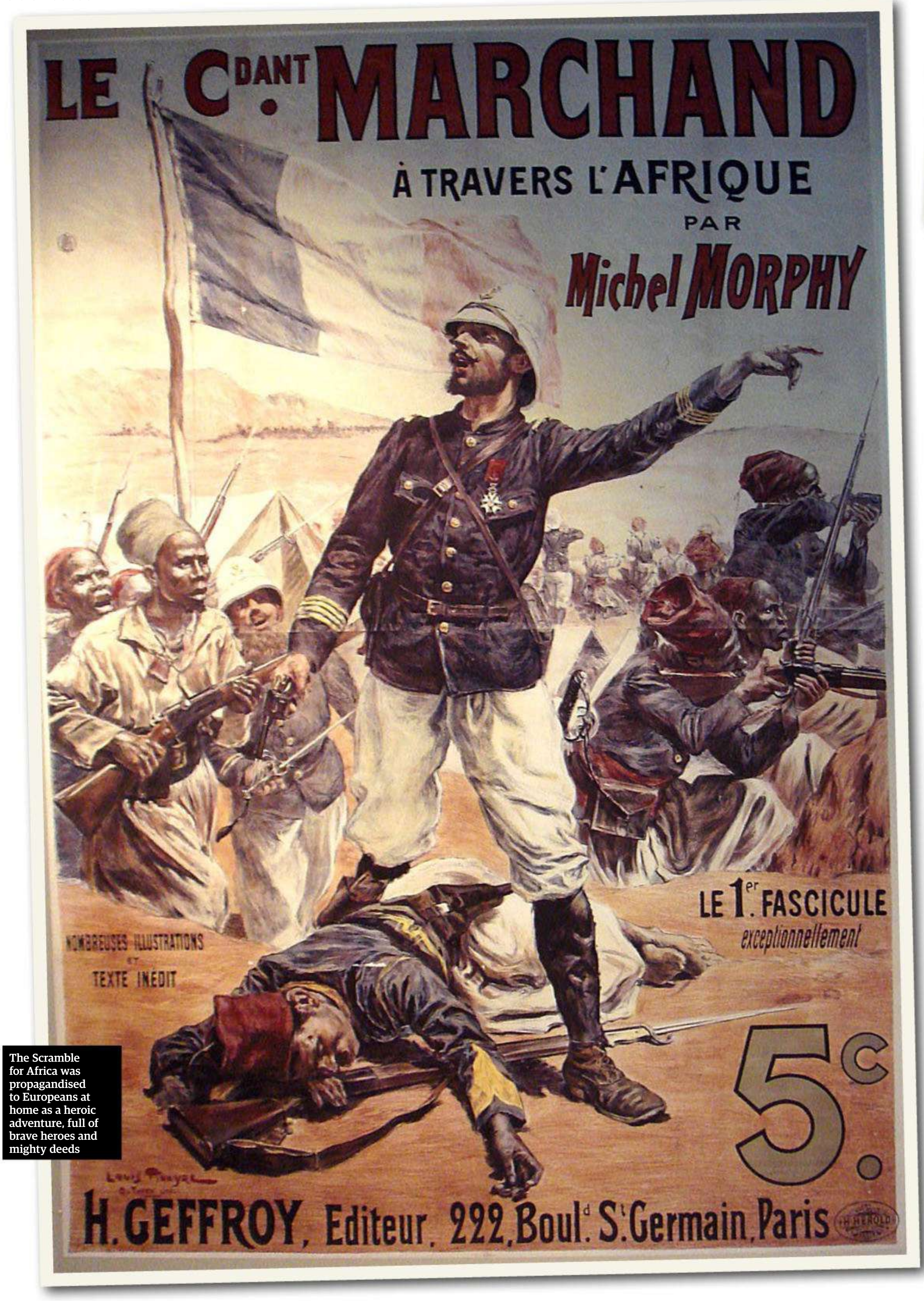
Mino warriors were mostly recruited as teenagers

Image source: wiki/Stanley B. Alpern, *Amazons of Black Sparta*

The Dora Milaje bodyguards in Marvel film *Black Panther* (2018)



Photograph of a Mino warrior from around 1890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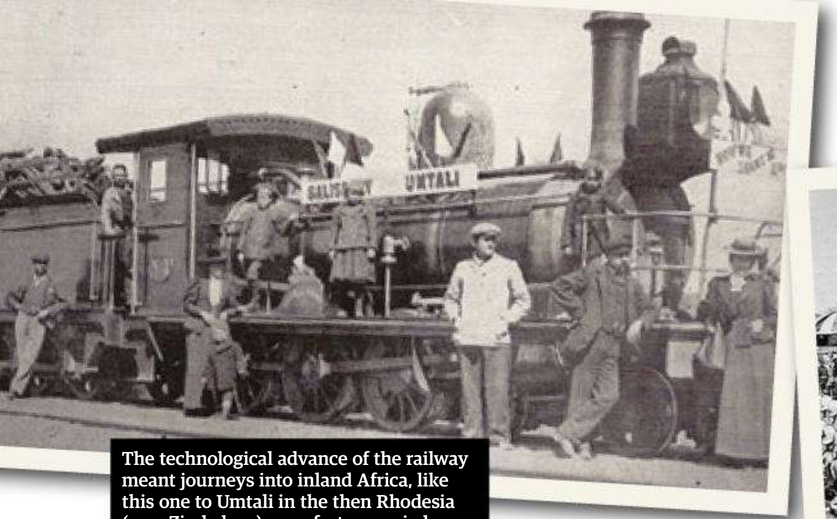
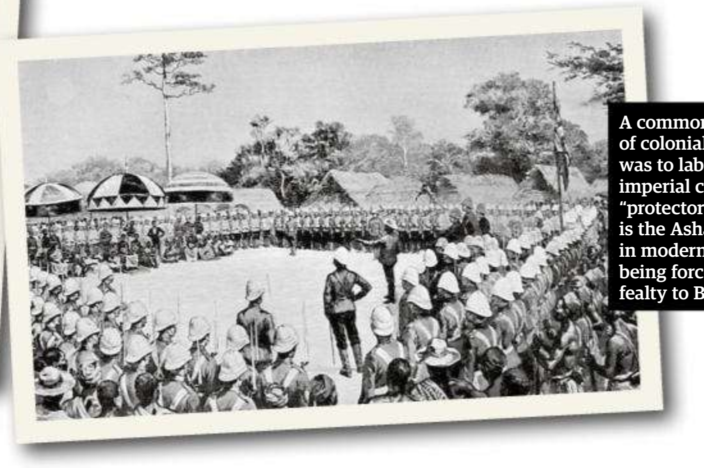
The Scramble for Africa was propagandised to Europeans at home as a heroic adventure, full of brave heroes and mighty deeds



The technological advance of the railway meant journeys into inland Africa, like this one to Umtali in the then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) were faster, carried a higher volume of passengers, and didn't rely on horses, who were vulnerable to the climate and terrain



A common tactic of colonial powers was to label their imperial conquests as "protectorates". This is the Ashanti Empire, in modern-day Ghana, being forced to declare fealty to Britain

The Scramble for Africa

When technical and medicinal advances meant a European push inland became possible, colonial powers doubled down on their conquest of the African continent

Written by April Madden

The African continent had already experienced centuries of colonial exploitation when Victorian technologies started to really make the world a smaller place. Until then, the African interior had been comparatively impervious to the march of imperial globalisation, with most outposts of European empires concentrated around the more accessible coastline. European colonists were highly susceptible to mosquito-borne malaria, which was prevalent in the African interior, but the 19th century discovery and production of quinine from Peru, which was used to prevent and treat the disease, emboldened explorers like the famous Dr David Livingstone, and soon adventurers, prospectors and missionaries were all making their way inland, often sponsored by wealthy companies or European governments. This helter-skelter grab for land and assets became known as the Scramble for Africa.

European countries and companies were chiefly interested in exploiting Africa's vast natural resources. Rubber and tin were essential to Victorian industry, while diamonds and ivory were highly covetable luxury goods. Tea, the social fuel of the British Empire, grew fast and well in the climates of Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Intensively farmed palm oil was used in everything from food to detergents to cosmetics. And not only were European capitalists interested in taking resources out of Africa, they were also interested in selling goods back to it, both to the colonists on the ground and to the people whose land they were exploiting. These were typically food items for which there was a European trade surplus, caused by technological advances in production, preservation and transportation. Fortunately for the producers, Europeans abroad were all keen to purchase a taste of home.

An even darker theme underlay the Scramble for Africa. The spectre of war between imperial Germany and the rest of Europe had been on the horizon long before hostilities began. Europe's empires were all scoping out the tactical advantages African territory could bring them, from alternative trade routes to India, to filling up their war chests through colonial gain. When the Scramble For Africa began in 1870, around ten per cent of the African continent was under European control. By 1914, when it ended with the beginning of the First World War, only Liberia and Ethiopia were still independent African nations.

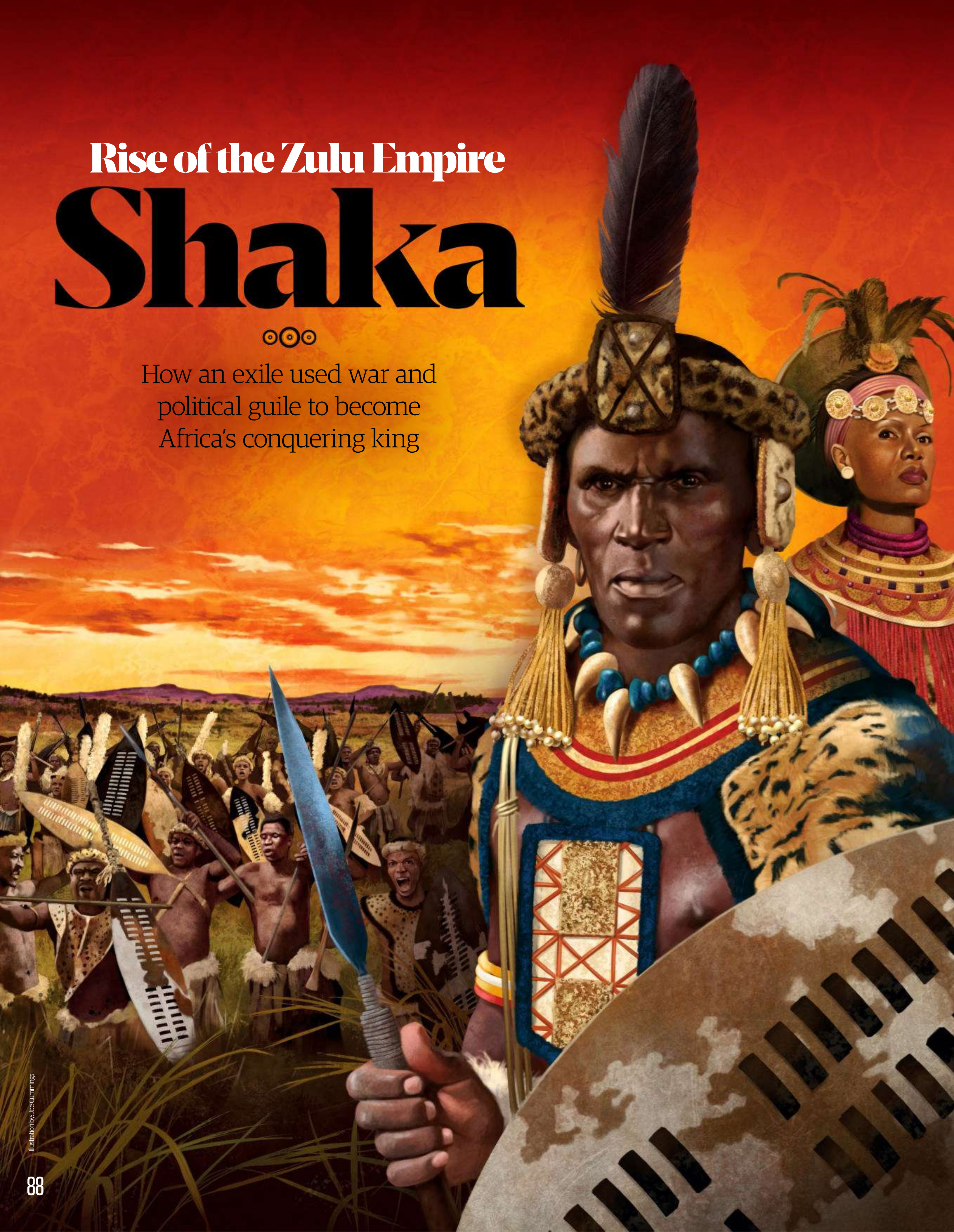
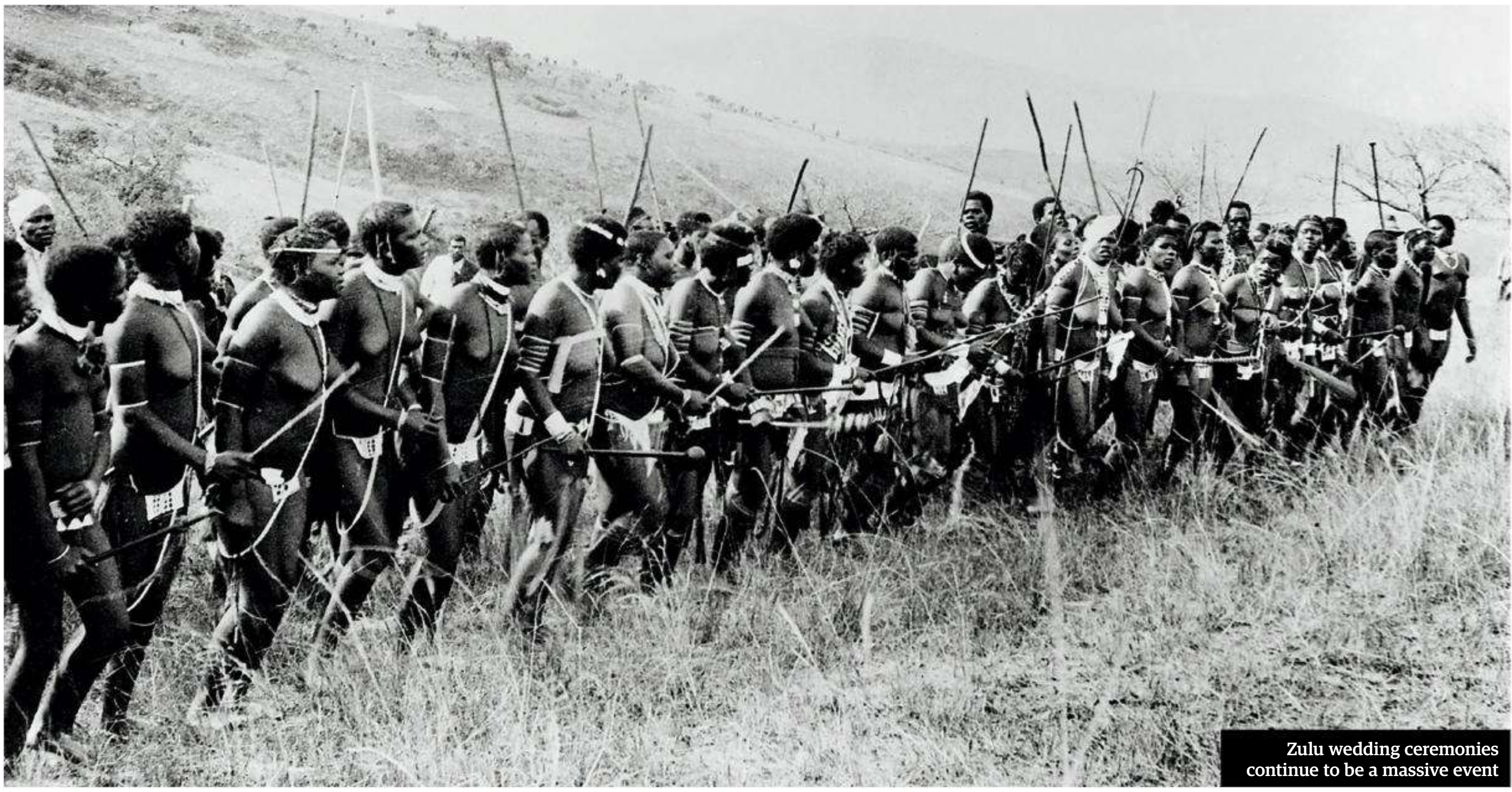


Illustration by: Joe Cummings

Rise of the Zulu Empire

Shaka

How an exile used war and political guile to become Africa's conquering king



Zulu wedding ceremonies continue to be a massive event

Image source: Wellcome Collection

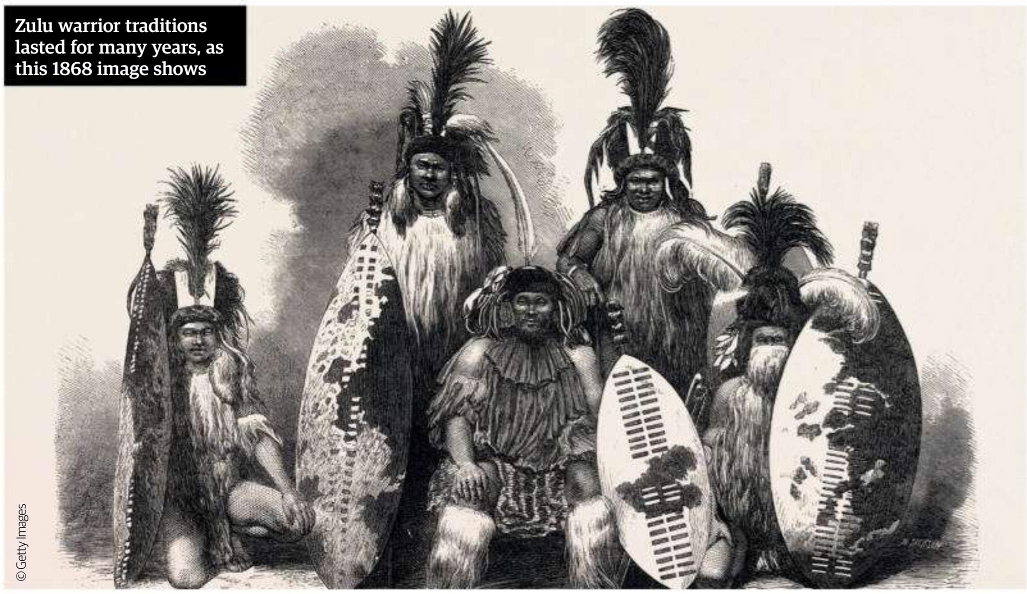
Who was the real Shaka kaSenzangakhona? Despot? Illegitimate usurper? Moderniser? Skilled diplomat? Bloody tyrant? Any exploration of the history of the first king of the Zulu has to inevitably come to the conclusion that we're not entirely sure. The history of Shaka has become so entwined with the motives of those who wished to make use of his tale. One source for the life of Shaka are notes taken by Western colonisers and traders, often looking to push the agenda of a savage African king or hoping to boost book sales through salacious accounts of atrocity after atrocity. Our other source is the oral history of the people themselves, often recorded many years after the event and sometimes quite clearly coloured by the people who succeeded Shaka, hoping to raise or diminish him depending on their own agenda.

So, is there anything about the life of Shaka we can be assured is true? Thankfully, yes. There's enough detail scattered through all of these sources to see an image of a king emerge, albeit one packed with caveats and requiring some amount of scepticism. What we can certainly do is deflate and explain some of the myths around Shaka and, just as interestingly, explain why they exist. Shaka has become an icon, used to this day as a pillar of Zulu identity. His legend has value to people and that in itself is worth examination. Hopefully by the end of this you will have a better understanding of who Shaka really was and why other depictions of him have existed for the last 200 years.

Before Shaka

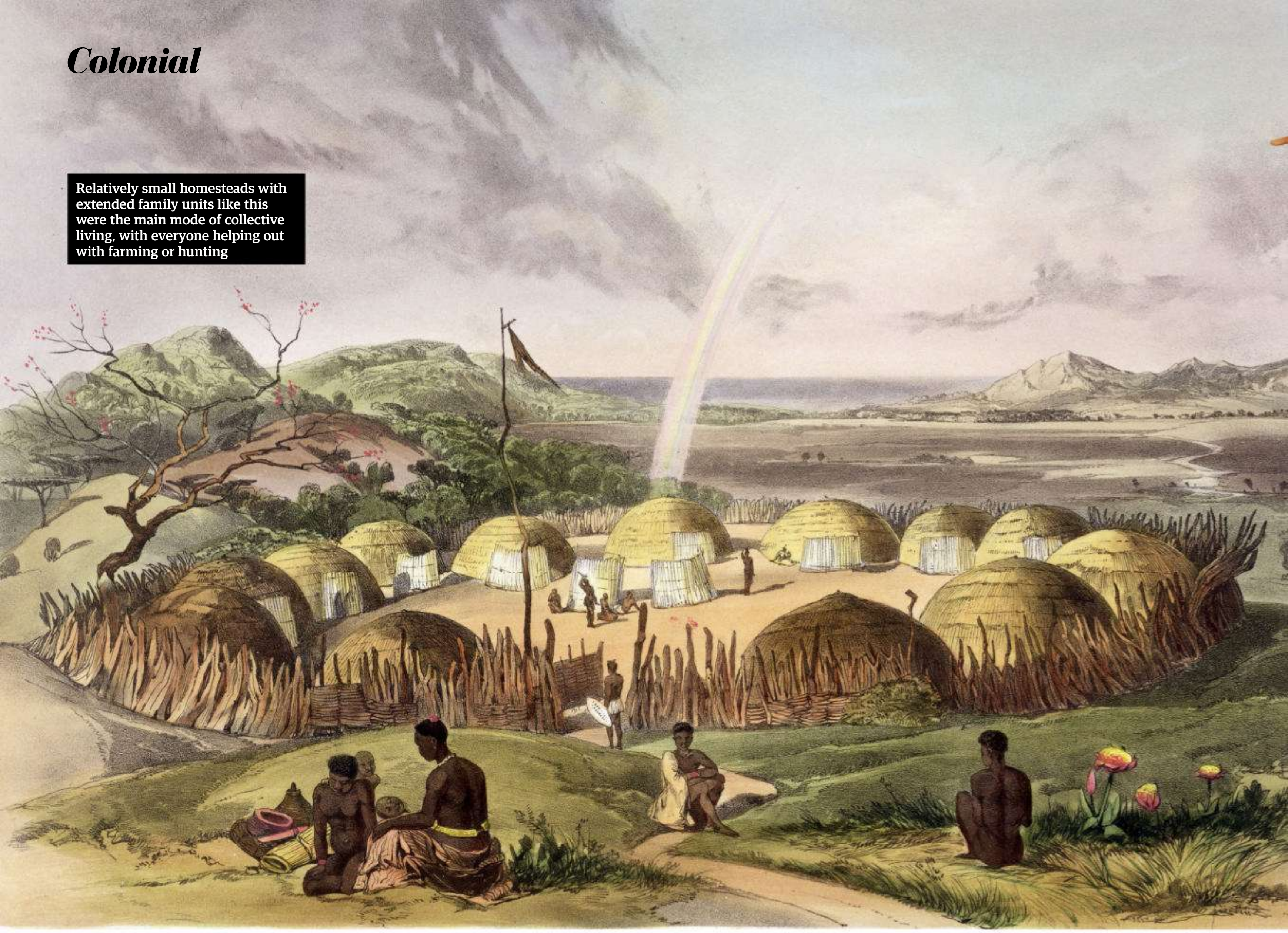
Shaka was born into a region dominated by clans, large and small, working on a kind of tributary system. When his father, Senzangakhona, was chief of the Zulu they were a lower level chiefdom situated in the valley of the White Mfolozi River, paying tribute to the Mthethwa to their southeast. The Mthethwa were one of three major chiefdoms to whom everyone else was paying tribute, the others being the Ngwane (later the Swazi) and the Ndwandwe. These three groups primarily all spoke Nguni and they vied with each other through the late-18th century into the beginning of the 19th century for control of the region nestled in the south-east of the continent. It was a region with a vast array of terrain and soil types, ideal for farming a variety of crops and grazing animals.

As the new century began new chiefs began to emerge that would shape the next decades. Zwide became the leader of the Ndwandwe around 1805 and would reign for about 15 years before he fatally crossed paths with Shaka, as we'll explain later, and Dingiswayo became the chief of the Mthethwa in 1806, someone who would become integral to the life of the future Zulu king. Around the same time as Dingiswayo, Senzangakhona reached maturity and was able to take the seat of his father Jama as chief of the Zulu (a regency was put in place run by his sister

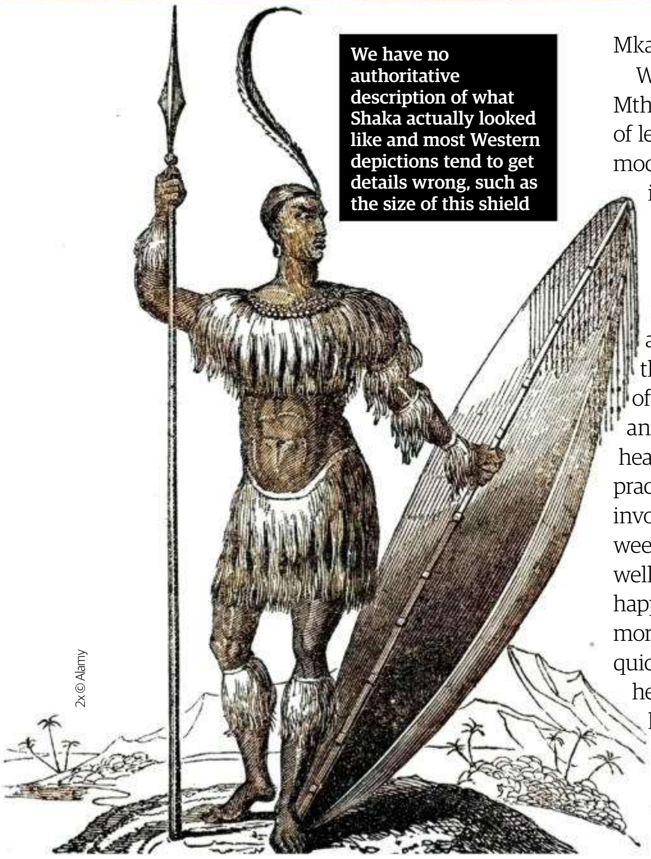


Zulu warrior traditions lasted for many years, as this 1868 image shows

© Getty Images



Relatively small homesteads with extended family units like this were the main mode of collective living, with everyone helping out with farming or hunting



We have no authoritative description of what Shaka actually looked like and most Western depictions tend to get details wrong, such as the size of this shield

2x © Alamy

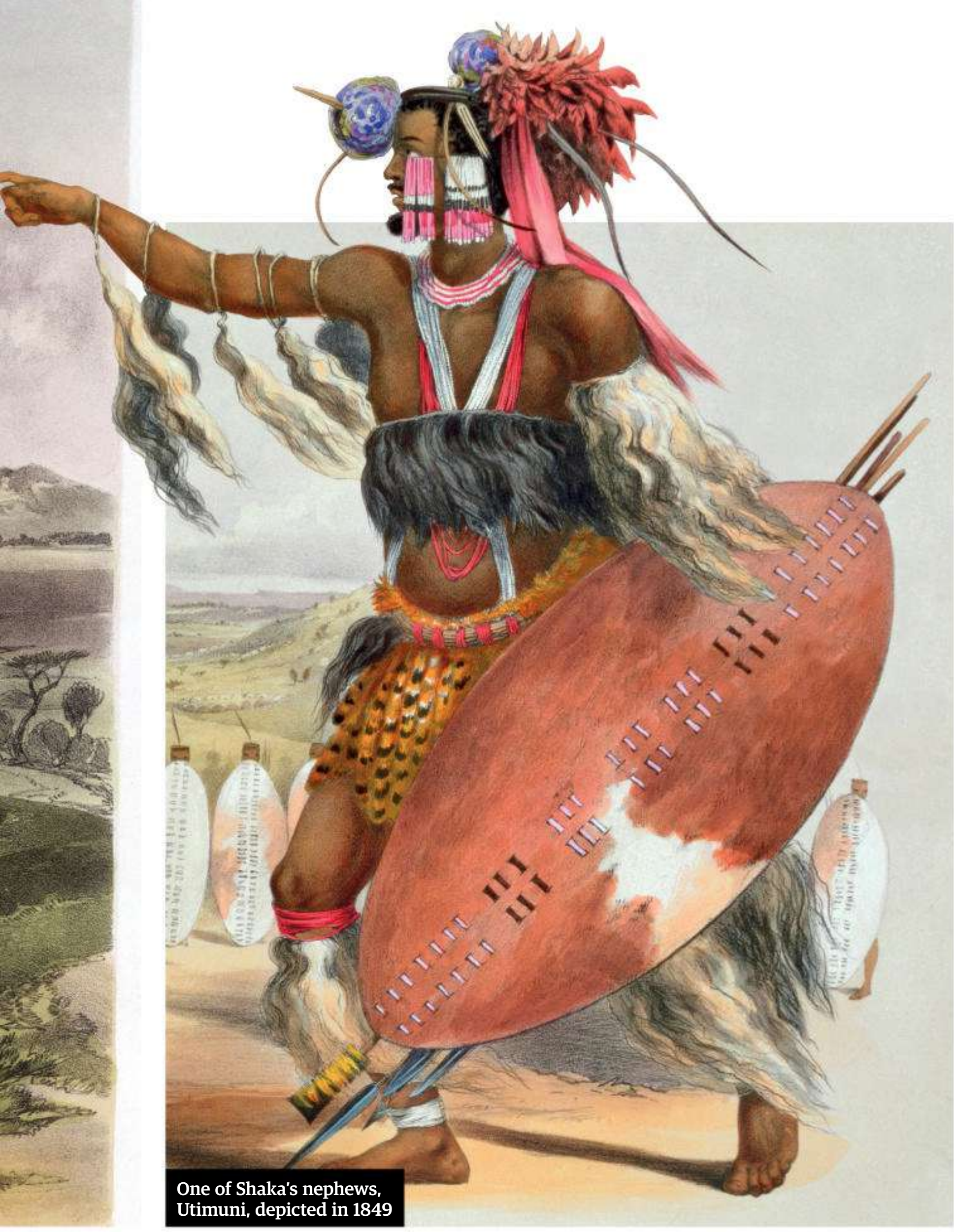
Mkabayi since their father had died in 1781).

While the Zulu were a junior partner in the Mthethwa confederacy, this new generation of leaders sought to bring in a number of modernising changes to the society they inherited. Organising men and women into age regiments, or amabutho, is one element that became common, essentially structuring people into work groups by age rather than regionality. It also appears that the Mthethwa, and by extension their tributary chiefdoms like the Zulu, did away with the ritual circumcision of men to mark their transition to maturity and marked this moment instead by use of head rings. This appears to have been for very practical reasons since the ceremony naturally involved adult men being out of action for several weeks as they recovered from the process (as well as schooling elements of the ceremony that happened beforehand) and they were entering a more modern and fast-paced world that required quick deployment of manpower. It's worth noting here that some of these most significant changes have sometimes been credited to the reign of Shaka, but the evidence would suggest that the reforms were coming into effect long before his time and that his contribution was either to accelerate or expand upon them.

Society more widely remained driven by the family unit, which typically involved a single patriarch at its head, often with multiple wives. The homestead, or umuzi, would involve a single hut structure for the head of the family with further huts arcing on either side for each of the wives to form a horseshoe shape. In the centre would be a kraal, meaning an animal pen. Collectively the family would be expected to meet the needs of everyone in the homestead, with women often farming the land and men typically hunting. Royal households were not much different, adding military considerations into the mix. They recruited men from the age regiments and had their own special groups dedicated to defending their interests. When not fighting, however, they still had to help out with the crops and hunting like everyone else.

A mysterious birth

It was into this relatively fractious but structured world that Shaka was born to his father Senzangakhona of the Zulu and mother Nandi, the daughter of the Langeni chief. The how and when of this rather pivotal event remains a matter of great debate. Most commonly, Shaka's birth is said to have been sometime in July 1787, but Dan Wylie in his work on Shaka estimates that something like



One of Shaka's nephews, Utimuni, depicted in 1849

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THE KING-MAKING AUNT

Exploring the importance of Mkabayi

Having not taken a wife of his own, Shaka relied heavily on his extended family, particularly the women, to run key parts of his kingdom. His own mother, Nandi, was chief among these figures for much of his life, but of near equal importance was the sister of Senzangakhona and Shaka's aunt, Mkabayi.

Mkabayi had acted as regent on behalf of Senzangakhona when their father Jama had died, and it's said she had even found her father the wife that bore him his son in the first place. Senzangakhona had still not reached the age of maturity and so Mkabayi had to step in to maintain the continuity of the family line. She and many of her sisters never married, preferring to remain princesses among the Zulu people rather than be married off to rival groups. In this position they had more autonomy and power than they would have done as the wife of a different chief.

While Nandi and Shaka were thought to be in exile, or at least living away from the Zulu, it had been the sisters like Mkabayi who had kept in touch and visited with the young Shaka, which may have helped build a strong bond between them. When Senzangakhona passed away, it was notable that Mkabayi gave her blessing to Shaka to return and usurp the chosen heir, helping to smooth things over with the people beforehand.

Mkabayi was no less important to Shaka's downfall, however. After the death of Nandi and military setbacks, she plotted with his brothers Dingane and Mhlangana to assassinate him. She then helped to orchestrate Dingane take the throne by plotting against Mhlangana.

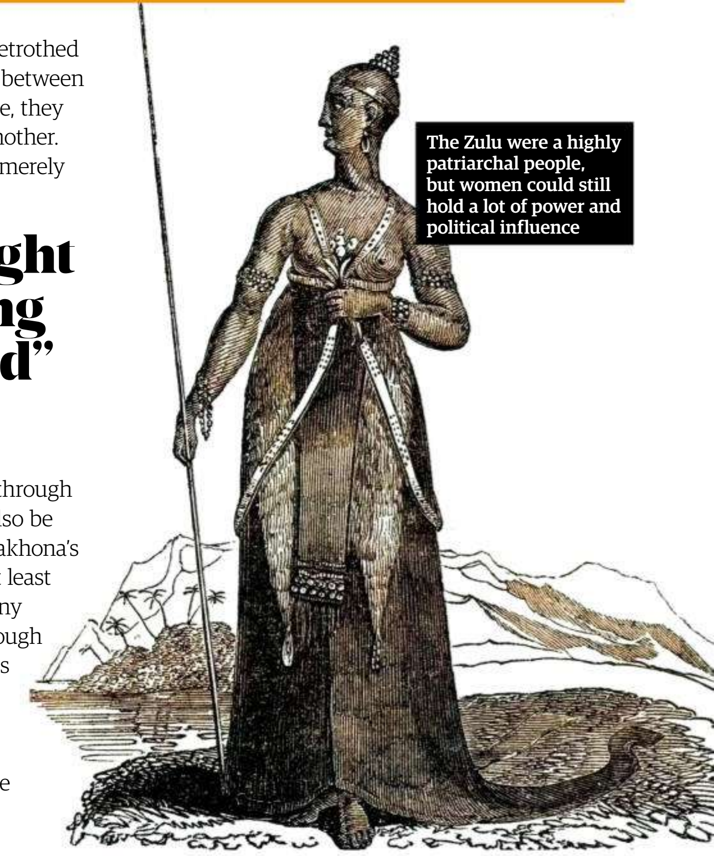
1781 makes as much sense. That would have made Shaka about 35 when he finally took over as chief of the Zulus. The how is the more complex element. Claims over Shaka's legitimacy are integral to his claim to the Zulu leadership and debunking that claim became important to many who followed him, both inside and outside the kingdom.

The most popular story is that Shaka was conceived out of wedlock, to the great shame of both Senzangakhona and Nandi. The pregnancy was hidden and blamed on itshati (a type of intestinal bug) and this is possibly where the name 'Shaka' came from. Mother and child were exiled to assuage the shame and the couple never married.

However, the evidence doesn't really support this tale. For a start, Nandi and Senzangakhona had at least two children together, the other being Shaka's sister Nomcoba. So, the more believable story is that Nandi was an isingodosi, or betrothed maiden, to Senzangakhona and while sex between them was prohibited before he came of age, they were permitted to be intimate with one another. The pregnancy therefore broke taboo, but merely meant that the rites needed to be rushed through and ultimately they did marry. It should also be remembered that Nandi was not Senzangakhona's only wife. In fact he had 15 of them and at least 18 sons between them in his lifetime. In any case, Shaka's legitimacy carried with it enough ambiguity to allow others to fill in the gaps as they wished.

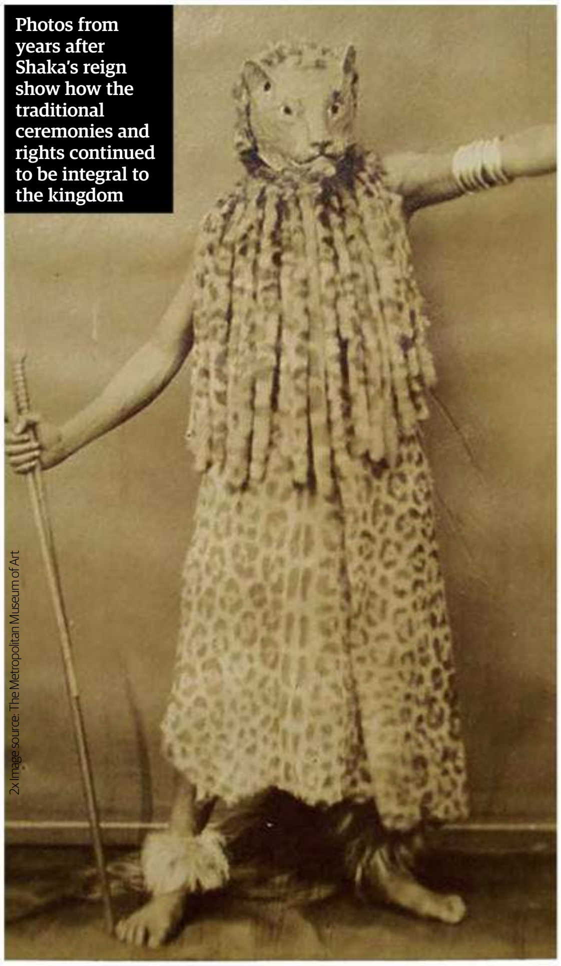
As for the exile portion of the story, that comes up again and again, even if the legitimacy question is put to rest. Some degree of travel between family units seems reasonable to expect and given the

> **"This new generation of leaders sought to bring in a number of modernising changes to the society they inherited"**



The Zulu were a highly patriarchal people, but women could still hold a lot of power and political influence long distances and lack of any modern transport methods, such trips might well cover long periods of time. Still, Nandi is said to have been a fiery and strong-willed woman who had no fear of standing up to her husband even as one of the lesser wives and it's possible that Shaka's parents clashed frequently. Still, when he was old enough Shaka was initiated into his father's key age regiment, the iWombe ibutho, so he wasn't completely ostracised when growing up.

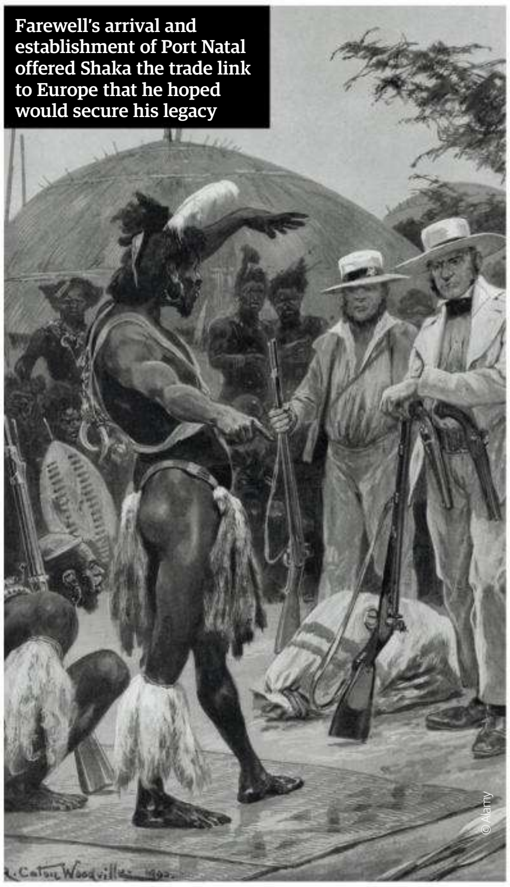
We have records of Nandi and her son leaving to live with other groups on multiple occasions, whether her own Langeni or others, and being visited by extended family. Eventually Shaka found himself with the Mthethwa, the chiefdom to whom Senzangakhona, along with around 30 other clans, paid tribute.



Photos from years after Shaka's reign show how the traditional ceremonies and rights continued to be integral to the kingdom

2x image source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The ox-hide shields of the Zulu have become an iconic symbol of the people



Farewell's arrival and establishment of Port Natal offered Shaka the trade link to Europe that he hoped would secure his legacy

© Alamy

The forging of Shaka

It's clear that it was under the tutorship of Dingiswayo that Shaka grew and learned most of what would serve him in taking the Zulu chiefdom and turning it into a kingdom - perhaps arguably even an empire. Shaka is said to have risen quickly through the ranks of the military thanks to his intelligence and initiative to become a respected general in the Mthethwa army, helping to win many victories for his chief. He was even given the honorary name, 'uSitshaka ka sitshayeki' meaning 'he who beats but is not beaten'.

Dingiswayo himself was one of the more progressive and reforming chiefs of the period, and it's from him that a few key innovations can be traced back that Shaka took on in later years. For instance, he moved further towards age regiments and away from regional work groups than other chiefs, which Shaka expanded. He also took tighter control of things like marriage, mandating when the men of his amabutho could take a wife. Marriage generally was an important tool in his arsenal as he also made strategic marriage arrangements with rivals, such as with his greatest enemy Zwade of the Ndwandwe, whose sister he took as a bride.

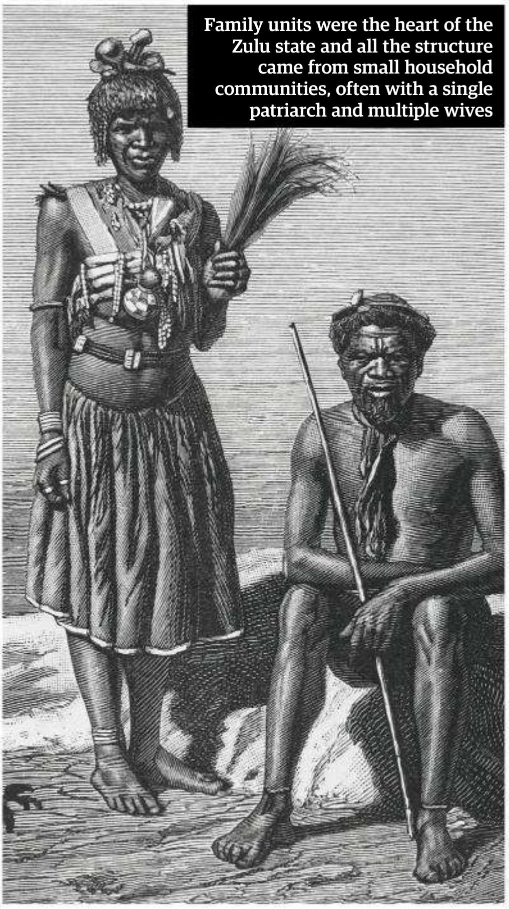
On the whole the leadership of Dingiswayo looks fairly similar to that of Shaka, with a mix of diplomacy, innovative thinking and occasionally brutal violence and single-mindedness. In coming to the throne he had killed his own brother and this is another lesson Shaka seems to have taken on board. He would also have taken into account the way in which placing the right ally at the head of a chiefdom could help maintain your own power, as Dingiswayo did when he backed Shaka to claim the Zulu chiefdom.

Senzangakhona fell ill and died in 1816, leaving his heir Sigujana to take over the Zulu. There are many tales from the region that tell of Shaka bewitching or poisoning his father, but the details are unclear on this point. Sigujana was only a little younger than Shaka, but belonged to his father's senior and eighth wife Bhibhi. As his first-born son, however, Shaka would have a strong claim to take his place and thanks to the backing of Dingiswayo of the more powerful Mthethwa, that wasn't likely to be a problem. A plot appears to have been hatched in concert with another son of Senzangakhona named Ngwadi. Having brought Sigujana into his confidence Ngwadi killed his half-brother while he bathed in the river and then sent word to Shaka to return to their father's capital city of Siklebheni.

From chief to king

What's the difference between a chief and a king? Possibly it's somewhat semantic, but the key difference between the role played by Shaka and that played by his father is that Shaka ended up at the head of the chiefdom pyramid and arranged what might previously have been a loose confederacy into a much more organised state. And he wasted no time in asserting his position even when he was still technically working under the umbrella of the Mthethwa.

Shaka moved closer towards having a full-time standing military force, making it the very centre of his political and social structure. They would be put through regular military training and would be sent out on regular raids to intimidate unruly tribes and take cattle from them, maintaining a base level of fear of the wrath of their king. These warriors would live in their own barracks and a strict prohibition on marriage without the king's



Family units were the heart of the Zulu state and all the structure came from small household communities, often with a single patriarch and multiple wives

Image source: New York Public Library

authority remained. Shaka would personally never take a wife, which in turn has fuelled much speculation about his sexuality or impotence, but the fact remains that his homestead was full of women and there's evidence he fathered children. This in turn led to stories that he would kill women who became pregnant by him, but again such stories may have been politically motivated, so it's unclear.

Women generally were a massive part of Shaka's political structure in the years to come. Nandi, his mother, was now queen mother and as such in charge of all palace household affairs, making her very influential. Much against her earlier reputation, she is said to have been a calming voice in the ear of the young leader. The other women in his family, such as his aunts and the many other wives of his father, would go on to positions as the heads of other chiefdoms, acting as political emissaries to be a symbol of his power and control.

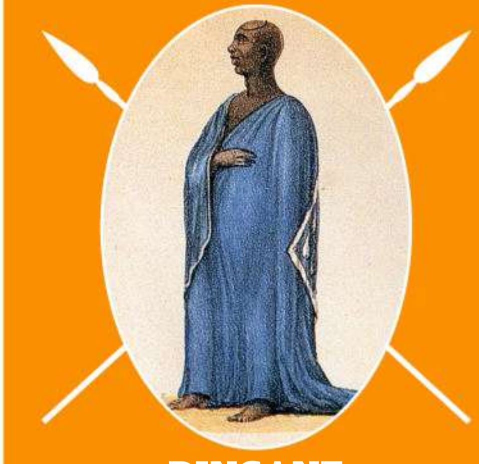
> **"The leadership of Dingiswayo looks fairly similar to that of Shaka, with a mix of diplomacy and brutal violence"**

However, it was early in Shaka's time as chief that his benefactor Dingiswayo was captured and killed by longtime rival, Zwide of the Ndwandwe. This event would likely have been a massive blow, not least since Dingiswayo had backed his claim with the Zulu and been an important influence on him going into adulthood. Shaka refused to yield to Zwide and stood his ground, giving Shaka the first big chance to prove his leadership to his own people and to implement some of his more profound tactical changes.

Zwide is thought to have attacked with perhaps more than twice as many men as Shaka was able to muster, and yet the smaller chiefdom managed to beat back their enemy on several occasions, each time retreating back to safer land, rebuilding and training. A key tactical change actually came about through a change in primary weapons for the Zulu. At this point throwing spears, or assegai, were common, but Shaka moved his men to using a two-foot, long-bladed single-handed spear called an iklwa. Combined with their famous isihlangu shields, Zulu warriors would look to knock the enemy off balance with a shield strike and then

THE ZULU SUCCESSORS

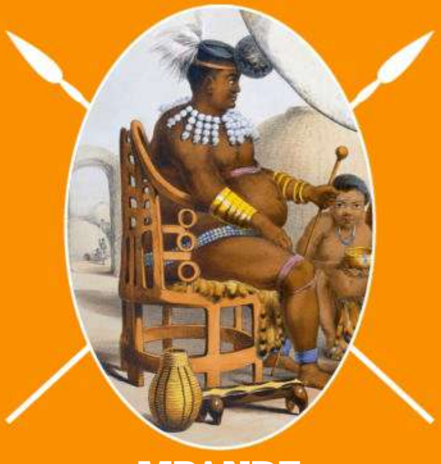
How the house of Senzangakhona continued



DINGANE

Reign: 1828-1840

The son of Senzangakhona's sixth wife and half-brother of Shaka conspired to kill the Zulu king and take his place with the help of some of his other half-brothers. Without Shaka in charge, however, some of the small communities on the outer edges of the kingdom began breaking away. Dingane was ultimately killed by his brother Mpande, who then took over.



MPANDE

Reign: 1840-1872

With the support of the Boers, Mpande looked to overthrow his brother in 1840. He was the son of Senzangakhona's ninth wife and may have been persuaded to seek the throne against his better judgement. As it was his son, Cetshwayo, would end up doing most of the heavy lifting of ruling after he defeated his brother to gain supremacy within the family.

CETSHWAYO

Reign: 1873-1879

Son of Mpande and grandson of Senzangakhona, Cetshwayo was the last king of an independent Zulu kingdom. He defeated and killed his younger brother Mbuyazi, who was his father's favourite, to secure his path to the throne in 1856 and was more or less in charge from that point. His reign ended with defeat in the Anglo-Zulu War, after which he was exiled.

Image sources: wiki/Allen Francis Gardiner, wiki/The Kings of the Zulu, wiki/Frances Ellen Colenso stab them in the midriff. It was a vicious method of fighting, and in concert with their bull-horn formation that would encircle the enemy, it's easy to see why Shaka built a reputation as a particularly ruthless and bloody military leader.

It's interesting to note here that despite this effective fighting style there was seen to be a cost to the warriors in fighting this way and it was important for returning soldiers to undergo ancient cleansing traditions to rid them of an umnyama, or dark omen. Ceremonies for this cleansing could last four days before they could finally meet with the king, at which time the battle would be reviewed and honours handed out. Poor performance or cowardice could be punished by execution.

When Zwide's army attacked on their third assault in 1819 Shaka's forces retreated into the Nkandla mountains, using the difficult terrain to even out the fight against the superior Ndwandwe numbers. Having routed them, Shaka moved his men back across the Black Mfolozi in a surprise advance into Zwide's territory and forced them into retreat. Any defeat for a ruler in this region and era could be seen as delegitimising their right to rule. Defeat brought great shame upon Zwide and some of the smaller chiefdoms who had formerly paid tribute to him began breaking away. Some, but not all, turned to Shaka and the Zulu, who now inherited much of the Mthethwa region as theirs as well.

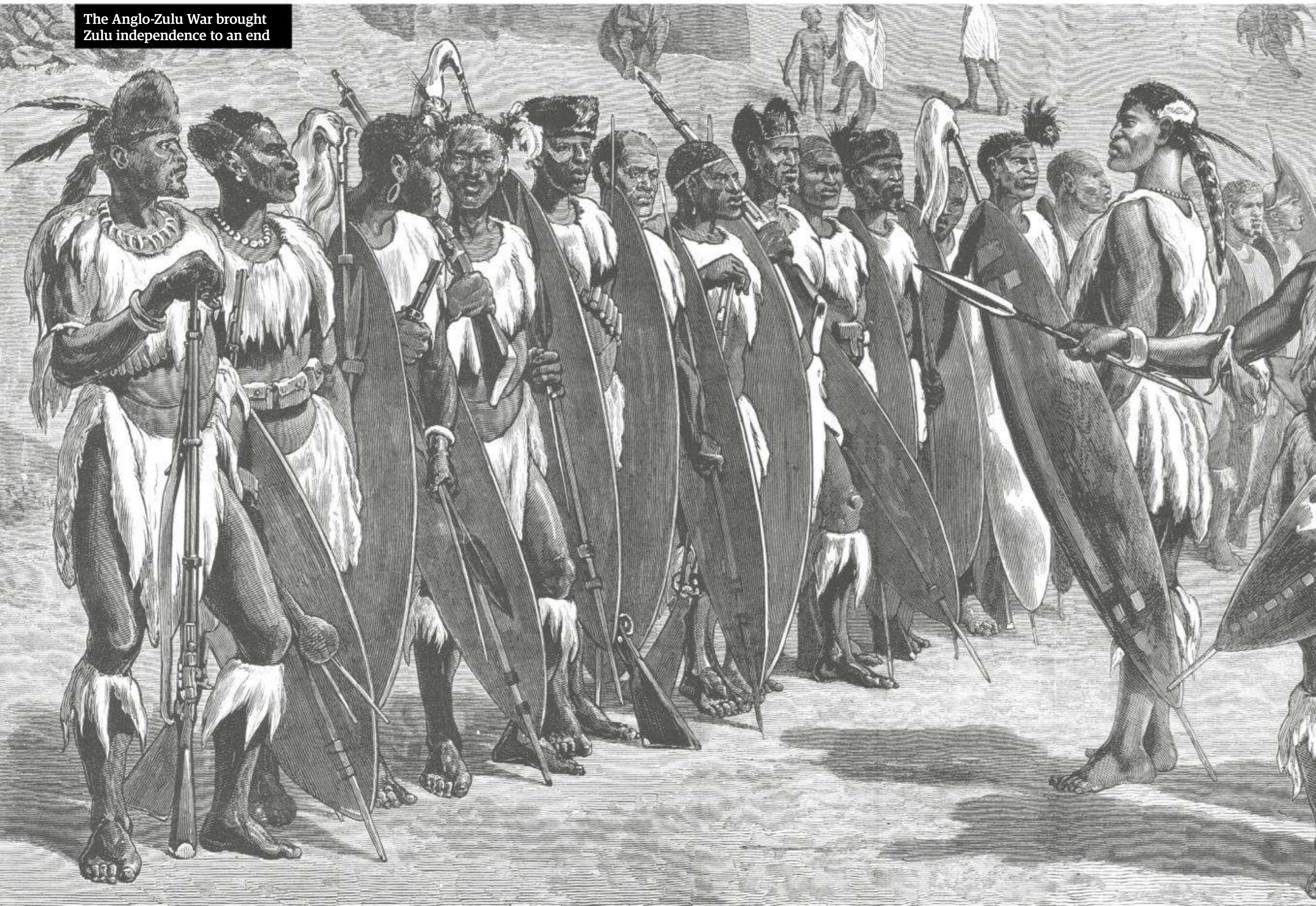
As mentioned earlier, some of these chiefdoms were given overseers in the form of members of the royal family, and others might be allowed a certain amount of autonomy (especially if they were on the outskirts of Zulu territory). But Shaka was not averse to doing much as his mentor had done for him and had chiefs assassinated in favour of more agreeable heirs to their lands.

A good example of this is the Qwabe, who were another large power on the coast and seemed to be growing again. It's possible Shaka and their chief Phakathwayo had known each other in their youth and fought often, building a substantial enmity. Either way, the Zulu were victorious over the Qwabe at Hlokohloko Ridge, capturing Phakathwayo and executing him. The rest of the Qwabe submitted to Shaka and Phakathwayo's half-brother Nqetho was brought out of exile to take his place. But the Qwabe would remain a threat, whether real or imagined, since Shaka would blame them for an assassination attempt on him some years later.

> "Shaka was not averse to doing much as his mentor had done for him and had chiefs assassinated in favour of more agreeable heirs"

Trade and tragedy

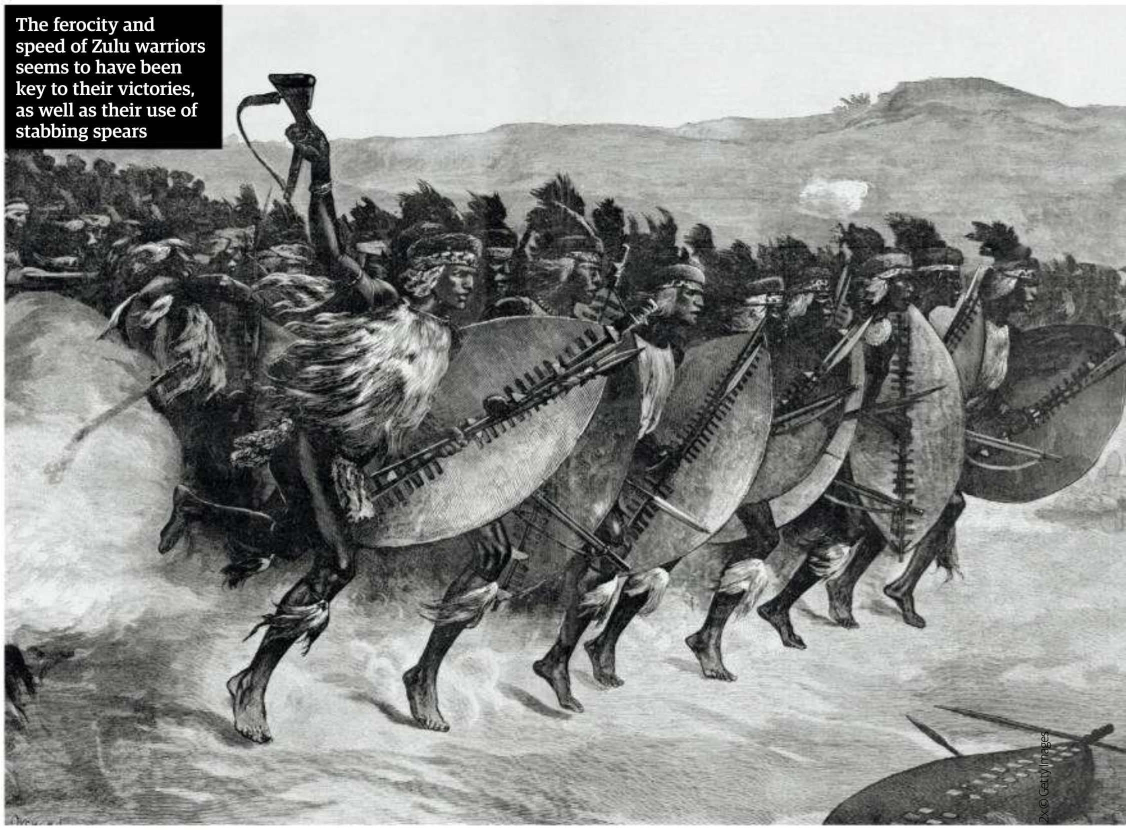
With his greatest adversaries dead or in retreat, Shaka went about building his kingdom into something that would last for the next 60 years. As tight central control was practically impossible, Shaka relied on regular raids and intimidation to maintain order, as well as strategic placing of family. To avoid the fate of Zwide he also needed to



The Anglo-Zulu War brought Zulu independence to an end keep winning victories and he apparently worried about seeming old, plucking out the white hairs that emerged on his head. A defeat of Zulu forces by the Mpondo in 1824 was the first sign that Shaka's rule might crack.

Still, matters of justice were decided by Shaka, not local chiefs, as were diplomatic relations with those outside the Nguni- speaking world. When traders landed on Zulu land in a bay they named Port Natal, Shaka saw the opportunity he'd been waiting for. The Cape Colony to the south had been established by the British in 1814 and he had long wished to establish a trade route with them, but was blocked by the distance and rival tribes in his way. The arrival of Lieutenant Francis George Farewell and Henry Francis Flynn to his kingdom in June 1824 could be the diplomatic opening he needed to enrich his kingdom far beyond anything his forebears had achieved.

Shaka granted them an audience, allowed them the right to stay in the bay, and almost like another small chiefdom they remained under his ultimate rule. Still, the situation was unsettled and later that year there was an attempt on Shaka's life by assassins. While he blamed the Qwabe, it's said that he suspected his half-brothers Dingane and Mhlangana. He sent forces to crush any embers



The ferocity and speed of Zulu warriors seems to have been key to their victories, as well as their use of stabbing spears

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THE BEAST'S HORNS

Analysing the famous Zulu battle formation

One Zulu battle tactic was the use of a formation known as the impondo zankomo, or The Beast's Horns, sometimes also referred to popularly as the Bull's Horns formation. The structure looks a little like the head of a bull, and with cattle being so integral to Zulu culture you might guess it was symbolic more than practical – but there was much more to it.

1. CENTRAL FORCE

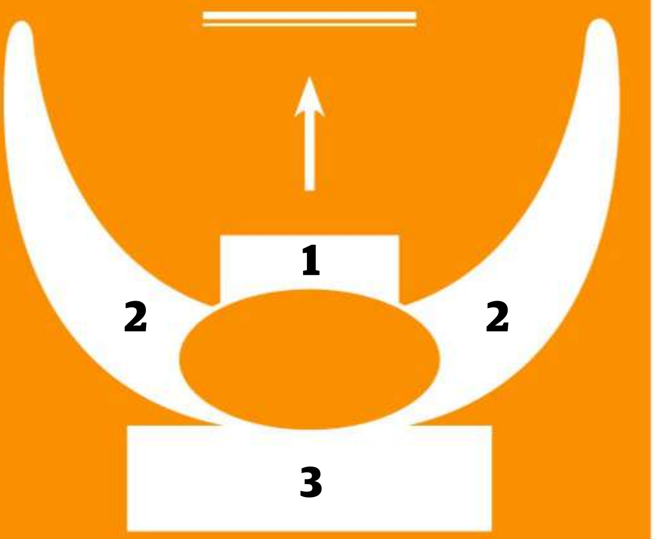
The isifuba was the 'chest' of the beast and would charge at the enemy directly and with great ferocity, hoping to knock them off balance and get them on their heels.

2. FLANKING

The izimpondo were the 'horns' of the manoeuvre and they flanked the enemy on both sides, rushing out from the middle and hoping to encircle them.

3. SUPPORT

The umava, or the 'loins', were the reserve force, leaping forward to cover the fallen in the front. They might even start facing away from the enemy to dissuade anyone from moving too soon.



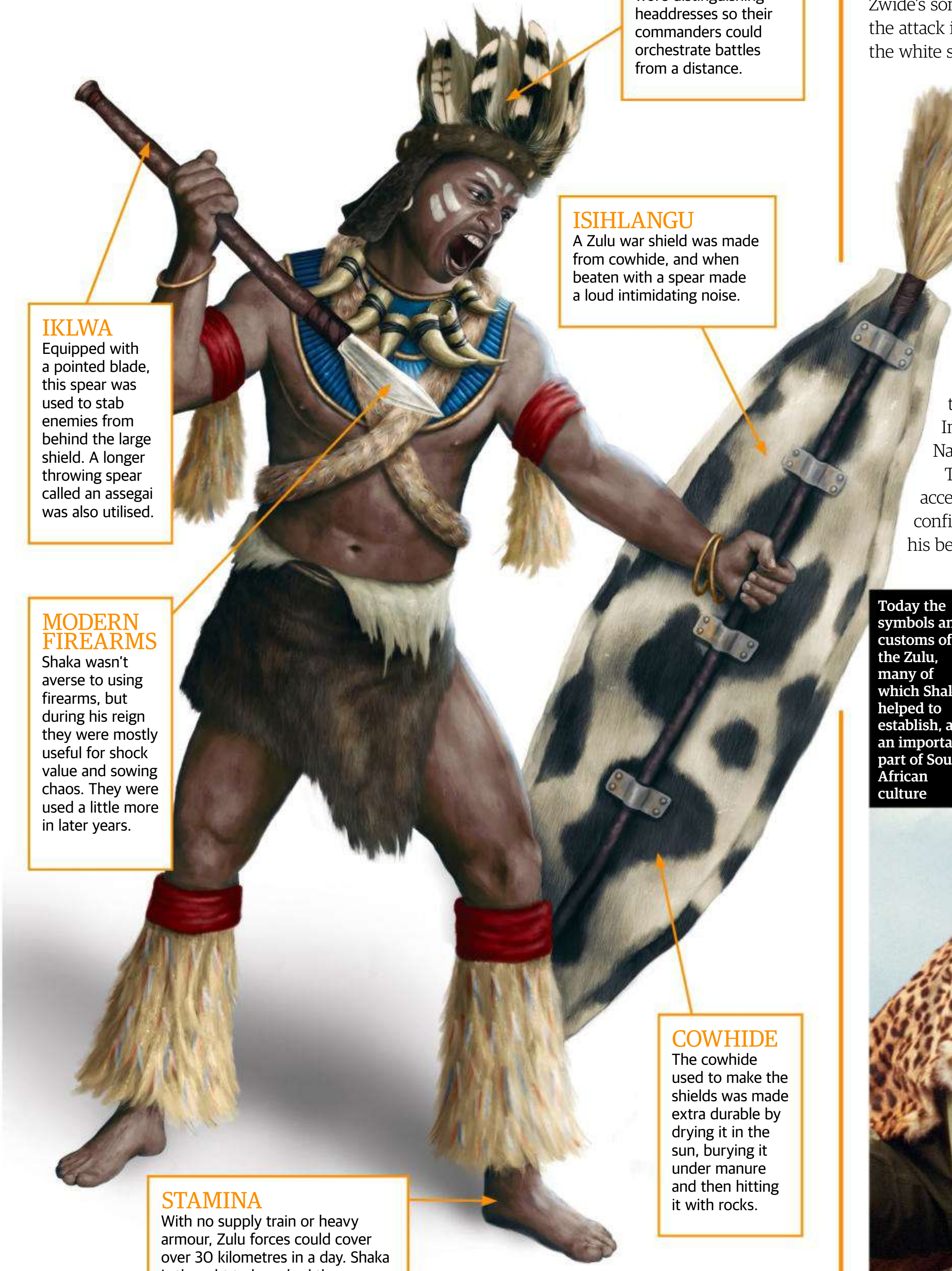
of Qwabe resistance and chase down possible suspects. He even took the step of moving his capital into Qwabe territory to stamp his authority on them. Meanwhile, the Ndwandwe were building in strength once again under the leadership of Zwide's son, Sikhunyana. Shaka personally led the attack in October 1826, backed by some of the white settlers, and achieved a comprehensive victory, followed by the slaughter of many of the civilians. The Ndwandwe would not rise again, with the survivors swearing allegiance to the Zulu or scattering to the safety of other chiefdoms.

Shaka hoped that trade through Port Natal and possibly the introduction of firearms into his army would prove to be the decisive path to more sustainable power. In 1827 he chose James Saunders King, the leader of a group that had shipwrecked in 1825, to lead his embassy to the Cape Colony. In the meantime, though, his mother Nandi died.

The downfall of Shaka really starts to accelerate from here and we can be fairly confident of this because the stories about his behaviour, genuine or not, become more

A ZULU WARRIOR

What made them unique?



HEADDRESS
Zulu regiments wore distinguishing headdresses so their commanders could orchestrate battles from a distance.

ISIHLANGU
A Zulu war shield was made from cowhide, and when beaten with a spear made a loud intimidating noise.

IKLWA
Equipped with a pointed blade, this spear was used to stab enemies from behind the large shield. A longer throwing spear called an assegai was also utilised.

MODERN FIREARMS
Shaka wasn't averse to using firearms, but during his reign they were mostly useful for shock value and sowing chaos. They were used a little more in later years.

COWHIDE
The cowhide used to make the shields was made extra durable by drying it in the sun, burying it under manure and then hitting it with rocks.

STAMINA
With no supply train or heavy armour, Zulu forces could cover over 30 kilometres in a day. Shaka is thought to have had them run barefoot rather than in sandals to improve their speed.

Today the symbols and customs of the Zulu, many of which Shaka helped to establish, are an important part of South African culture

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> “It was suggested by leaders that succeeded shaka that he killed his mother Nandi himself, perhaps in a rage”

and more extreme. It was suggested by leaders that succeeded him that he killed Nandi himself, perhaps in a rage that she had hidden a son he had fathered, but we do know that a period of mourning was established and he directed his rage at the Qwabe once again. Further stories claim he ordered all pregnant women and their husbands to be killed, but it does seem his chief advisor Ngomane kaMqomboli forbade harvesting or milking for a year, which was a rather impractical measure.

The trader and explorer Nathaniel Isaacs tells us that Shaka began to see things were getting out of hand in the wake of Nandi's death and doubled his efforts to secure a partnership with the British.

James King's embassy in early 1828 failed as he tried to convince the British to take control of Port Natal, circumventing Shaka's authority, and this simply confused the matter. Shaka's attack on the Mpondo immediately to the colony's north likely didn't ease the growing tensions. The final stage of mourning required a war to cast out the umnyama and they were the perhaps inopportune targets. However, a second embassy was arranged in September, this time led by members of the original traders and a man named John Cane. Alas, while Cane would prove successful and a treaty was prepared, Shaka would be assassinated before it could arrive.

The last days

Shaka ordered another campaign, this time heading north against the Gaza kingdom. Already an unpopular move so soon after a campaign heading south, it proved disastrous, with his army decimated by malaria and dysentery before they even reached the enemy. Forced to withdraw, what could have been a bolstering victory became a humiliation and was all that was needed for Shaka's enemies to see an opening. Much as he had suspected, his brothers Dingane and Mhlangana were plotting against him and set aside their rivalry to succeed Shaka to first depose him. Shaka's aunt, Mkabayi, who had helped his ascension, now backed this coup as well, perhaps blaming Shaka for the death of Nandi or even being the creator of that legend. They were also backed by one of his advisors, Mbopha.

On 23 or 24 September 1828 Shaka was killed by his brothers as he sat in his personal quarters. Mbopha created a distraction, scattering the many women and attendants around the king, and then one or all of the three men, although it's unclear how it played out exactly, stabbed him. It's said that his last words were, “What is the matter my father's children?” Ultimately Dingane would emerge as king, turning on Mhlangana as well.

So we come back to the question of who was the real Shaka kaSenzangakhona? Even to this day the Zulu nation is said to have been ‘born out of Shaka's spear’ and that description seems accurate. War and bloodshed were never far from this warrior-king's thoughts, but he may not have been the crazed murderer that later tales made him out to be. He was capable of incredible cruelty and violence, but it would be fair to say no kingdoms in history have been built on anything less. The very fact that he is surrounded by so much myth makes him all the more intriguing and the nation he left behind so unique.

The 1986 TV series *Shaka Zulu*, starring Henry Cele in the title role, is one of the most iconic depictions of the Zulu king, although not necessarily the most accurate

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> “Mandela hadn’t had a photo taken in 27 years and this added to his legend”

Haile Selassie

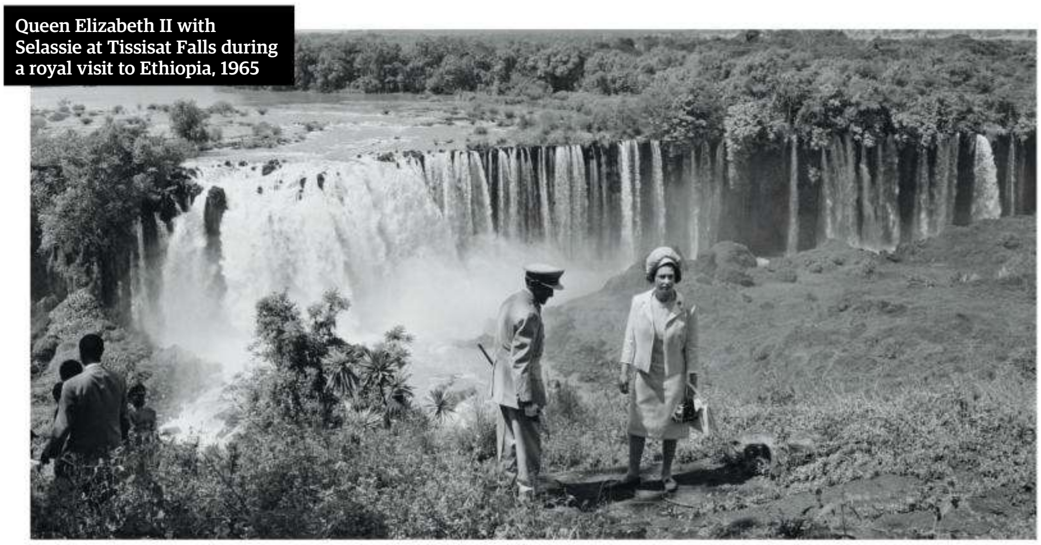
Under Emperor Haile Selassie's leadership, Ethiopia rose to international prominence, and he became a god to men in the process

The legend of the last emperor of Ethiopia is one shrouded in mystery and religious mysticism, that elevated him to a status greater than a mere man or ruler. Before he was named Haile Selassie, he was known as Tafari Makonnen. He was born in a hut on the outskirts of the country on 23 July 1892, in Ejersa Goro. Makonnen was the great-grandson of former ruler Sahle Selassie of Shewa. His father Ras (Prince) Makonnen was a senior adviser to Emperor Menelik II.

Originally, Tafari Makonnen was not the next in line to succeed the Ethiopian throne. Menelik II's heir was his grandson Lij Iyasu. In 1913, Menelik died, leaving the throne and the country in disarray. Seen as an outsider of the Ethiopian monoculture and national religious zeal, his grandson was not very popular. For one, Lij Iyasu was a Muslim in a majority Christian nation. He was also considered to be unreliable and a poor leader. For about three years, the Christian majority worked to depose him. The throne was essentially emptied, leaving Zauditu, Menelik's daughter, to serve as empress in 1917. Tafari Makonnen was named heir apparent.

Zauditu died on 2 April 1930, and Makonnen was crowned emperor under the regnal name Haile Selassie ('Might of the Trinity') seven months later. In terms of politics, he was far more progressive than Zauditu. Makonnen ushered in a new, modern age in Ethiopia by primarily attempting to gain international recognition from foreign powers. He worked tirelessly to gain admission to the League of Nations despite not ending slavery in the country - a League requirement.

Under his rule, the new emperor expanded the rights of citizens by spearheading the creation of Ethiopia's first modern constitution



Queen Elizabeth II with Selassie at Tissisat Falls during a royal visit to Ethiopia, 1965

The Global Rastafarian Movement

The creation of the Rastafarian faith was spearheaded by activist, businessman and pan-African scholar Marcus Garvey. Garvey once prophesied: "Look to Africa where a Black king shall be crowned, he shall be the Redeemer." That man was Emperor Haile Selassie, also known as Ras Tafari Makonnen. Notably, the religious movement that spread across the Caribbean and influenced pop culture hinged on the idea of a Black king being the reincarnated messiah and God on Earth.

All emperors of Ethiopia were believed to be descendants of the Israelite King Solomon, and Abyssinian Queen Sheba. On a visit to Israel, Solomon and Sheba fell in love during what was meant to be a diplomatic meeting of two ancient leaders of states. Sheba returned to Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) with a child that would lead to a divine line of future kings and queens.

For many Rastas, Ethiopia was seen as a religious paradise. The hope was to return and escape the 'hell' that was the Caribbean. Terms like 'Lord of Lords', 'King of Kings', and 'Conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah' were synonymous with Haile Selassie. Notably, the Emperor did not publicly acknowledge the faith, but the new world religion is a pop-culture phenomenon.

INDIA
HOUSE

Crowds of Rastafarians await the arrival of Haile Selassie in Kingston, Jamaica, 1966

Emperor Haile Selassie is a descendant of Menelik I of Ethiopia, the alleged son of the Biblical King Solomon of Israel

on 16 July 1931. But in order to do this, he had to challenge some of the cultural and political norms in Ethiopian society. Throughout his reign, Selassie was constantly challenged by nobles and other high-ranking rivals. The constitution, in effect, gradually decreased the traditional power of the nobility.

Selassie's leadership pushed for the country's modernisation – factories, cars, and more technological advances – because he believed that if Ethiopia did not do so, it would succumb to European imperialism and colonialism. "We need European progress only because we are surrounded by it," he said. "That is at once a benefit and a misfortune."

This proved to be true. The 1930s were a time of political progress and darkness, as the fascist Italian army under Benito Mussolini began its invasion into Ethiopia. Mussolini saw it as a chance to avenge the Italian defeat in the war of 1895-96, and the conquest of Ethiopia would provide a bridge between Italy and its Somaliland possessions. The invasion began in December 1934, and in the war that followed, Ethiopia's forces were outmatched by Italy's air force and superior weaponry. In 1936, Mussolini declared an 'Italian Empire' and withdrew from the League of Nations.

After two years of fighting, Selassie was forced into exile and left with no choice but to seek the aid of the League of Nations in Geneva. He managed to build an international coalition and alliance with the British to launch a counter-invasion. Together, they inspired insurgents to rebel as forces liberated the country. By May 1941, the Italians were defeated. He said of the invasion: "Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph."

Near the end of his reign, Selassie's popularity began to dwindle. Nobles were losing power under his new constitution created in 1955. While slavery was officially abolished in 1942, the quality of life for many was still poor. By the 1960s and 1970s, there was rising unemployment and administrative failures, leading to the rise of a new communist regime called the Derg. Selassie was deposed on 12 September 1974 and imprisoned. He died the following year, supposedly of respiratory failure, but it was later discovered to be an assassination ordered by the new leadership.

Selassie's legacy is a complicated one. He was one of the founding members of the African Union. He put Ethiopia on the world stage and managed to create political stability for decades. However, his rule was one of pain too. Human rights violations were common and there were tendencies towards megalomania. The emperor was one of the world's most interesting leaders – for better or worse.

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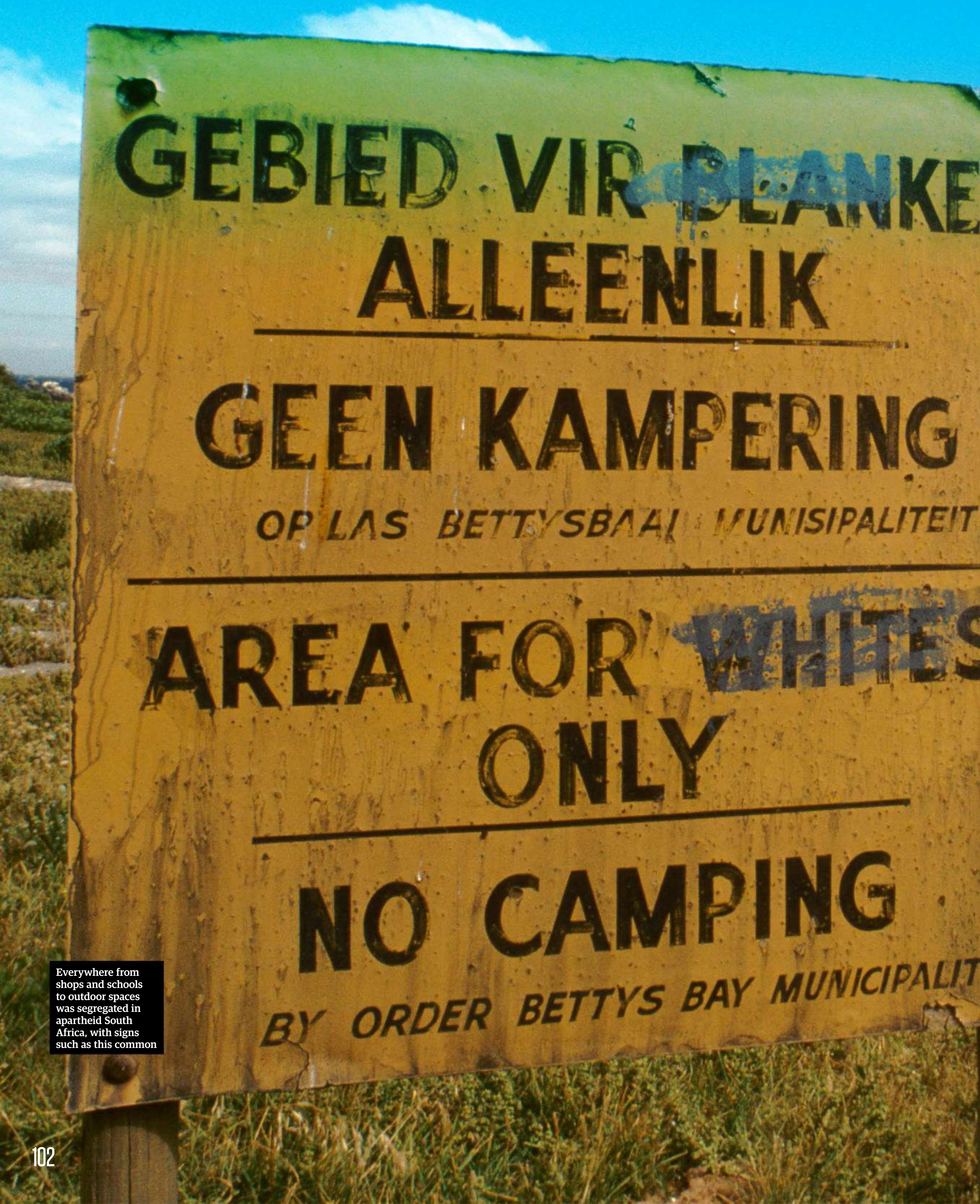
GEBIED VIR BLANKE
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ONLY
NO CAMPING
BY ORDER BETTYS BAY MUNICIPALIT

Everywhere from shops and schools to outdoor spaces was segregated in apartheid South Africa, with signs such as this common

Apartheid

South Africa's policy of racial segregation made it an outcast on the world stage until the 1990s

Written by April Madden

In the 1980s, South Africa was a pariah state. Vilified in the global media and with protests a regular occurance outside many of its embassies, its government and people were the subject of trade embargoes from countries around the world, with the sale of everything from guns to well-known brands forbidden to the embattled nation. The reason was South Africa's racist authoritarian policy of apartheid.

Apartheid was enacted in 1948, at a time when other countries that had employed segregationist policies were beginning to rethink them in the wake of World War II. The USA, which had begun its process of desegregation in the 1950s, was one of South Africa's keenest critics, despite having only fully ended its own racial separation policies in 1964. Under apartheid, the rights and privileges of white people in South Africa were prioritised over those of others. Whites were at the top of the social food chain, followed by the Indian immigrants and their families who had been so vital to South Africa's industrialisation. Those who were called 'Coloureds' were next - this wide grouping encompassed everyone from those of mixed race to a range of non-white, non-African nationalities. At the bottom of the pile, disenfranchised and dispossessed, were Black people.

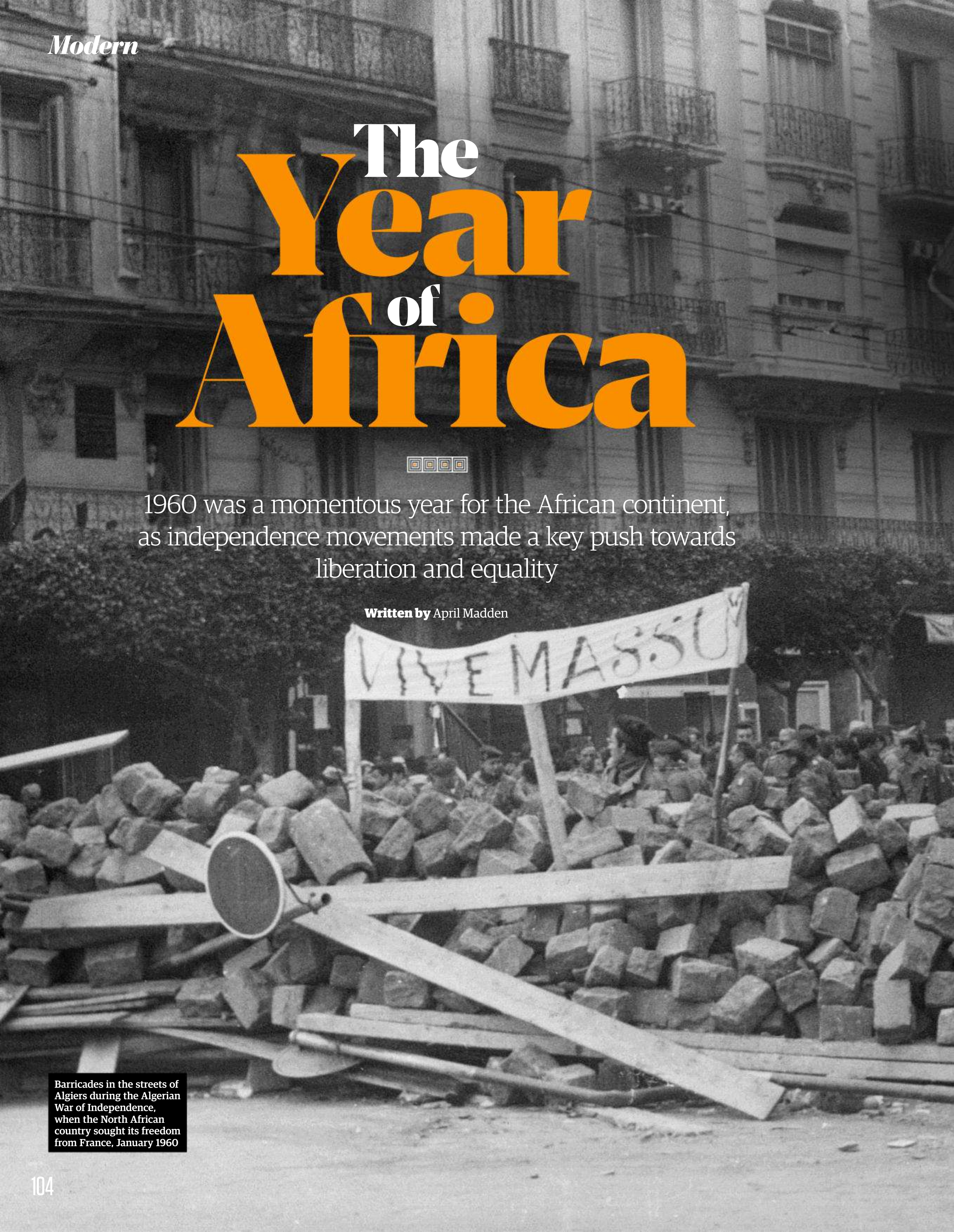
Apartheid was divided into two kinds: petty, which governed public spaces like shops, beaches, and social settings; and grand, which codified the kind of job you could get or house you could live in based on your race. In practice, it meant that white people had access to the best schools, jobs, goods, healthcare, neighbourhoods and leisure spaces, while Black people lived in poverty, with poor educational outcomes, few employment opportunities other than menial service, and little to no healthcare or entertainment. People were forbidden to mix, to make friends, or to form romantic or sexual relationships outside of their racial group.

Under increasing pressure from the international community, the South African government finally began to discuss dismantling apartheid with the predominantly Black African National Congress party in 1987. In 1990, one of the ANC's most prominent activists, Nelson Mandela, was freed from prison, and in 1991 South Africa finally repealed apartheid legislation. Today South Africa has a democratically elected government, which since the 1990s has been dominated by the ANC. The last white president of South Africa was FW de Klerk, under whose presidency apartheid was abolished, and who served as a deputy president to Nelson Mandela after his landslide election win in 1994.

The Year of Africa

1960 was a momentous year for the African continent, as independence movements made a key push towards liberation and equality

Written by April Madden



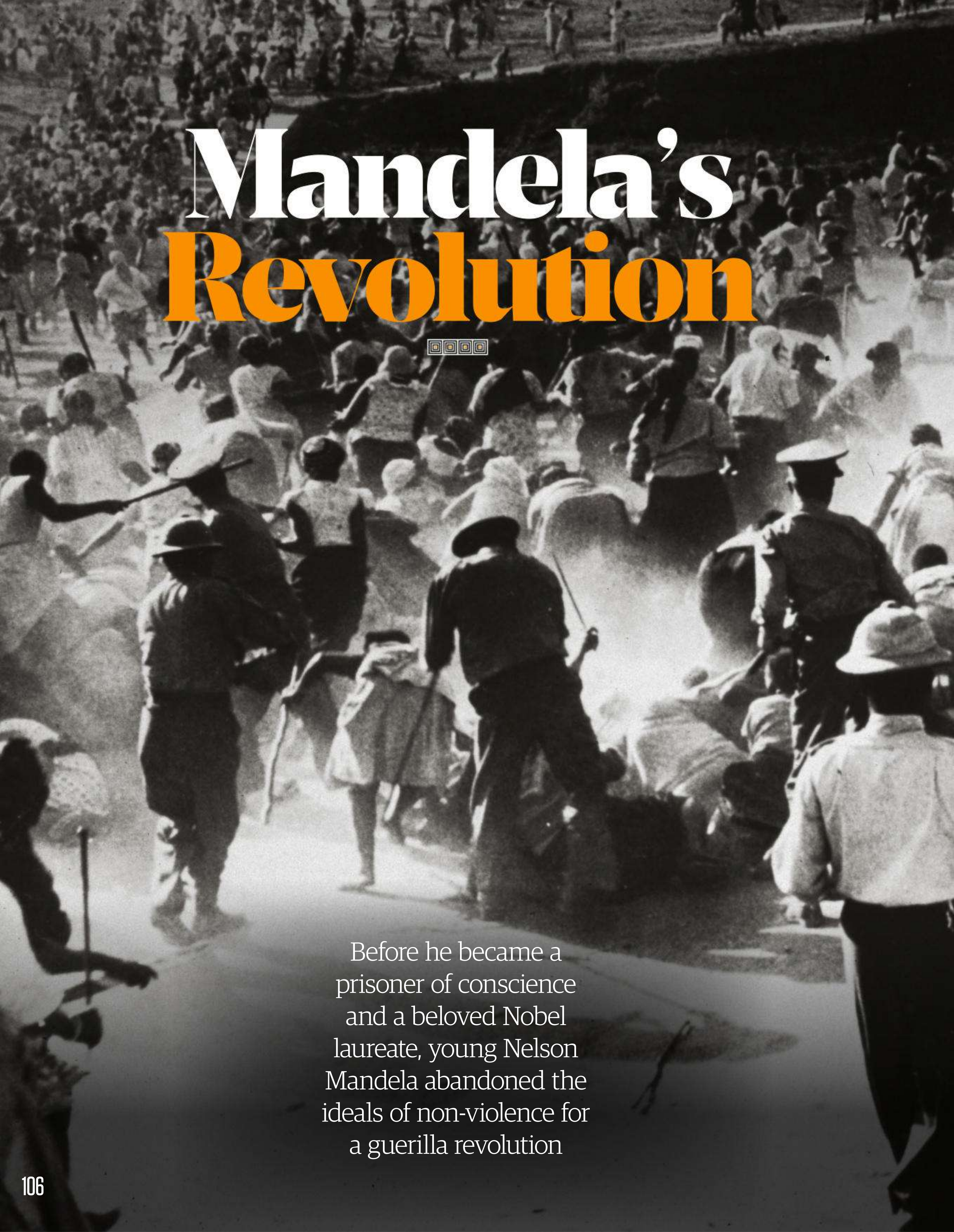
Barricades in the streets of Algiers during the Algerian War of Independence, when the North African country sought its freedom from France, January 1960

The wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact." So said British prime minister Harold Macmillan in his famous 'Winds of Change' speech to the South African parliament in Cape Town in February 1960. It was actually the second time he'd made the speech, but here in apartheid South Africa it had much more impact on the watching world than it did when he originally voiced this opinion in Accra, Ghana over a month before. In Cape Town it was met with stony silence from the authoritarian white minority that governed the segregated nation. In Accra, however, it was an acknowledgement of a movement that had begun to electrify the African continent.

From country to country, the Pan-African movement had swept across the land, with its message of unification amongst the African diaspora at home and abroad. Its message was to unite, and to rise up against the colonial shackles that had oppressed Indigenous Africans for so long. In 1960 that dream became a reality. Guinean politician Caby Sory's reaction to Macmillan's notorious speech was to say "Guns and bayonets can no longer prevail in the face of the strong conscience of the populations of Africa, which are determined to put an end to colonialism." This opinion was echoed across the continent. By the end of 1960 17 African nations had achieved independence from France, Britain and Belgium. Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah addressed the United Nations on the subject, saying that Africa didn't seek to punish the nations that had colonised it, but that it did demand its freedom:

"Africa does not seek vengeance. It is against her very nature to harbour malice. Over two million of our people cry out with one voice of tremendous power. And what do they say? We do not ask for death for our oppressors; we do not pronounce wishes of ill-fate for our slave-masters; we make an assertion of a just and positive demand; our voice booms across the oceans and mountains, over the hills and valleys, in the desert places and through the vast expanse of mankind's inhabitations, and it calls out for the freedom of Africa. Africa wants her freedom. Africa must be free."

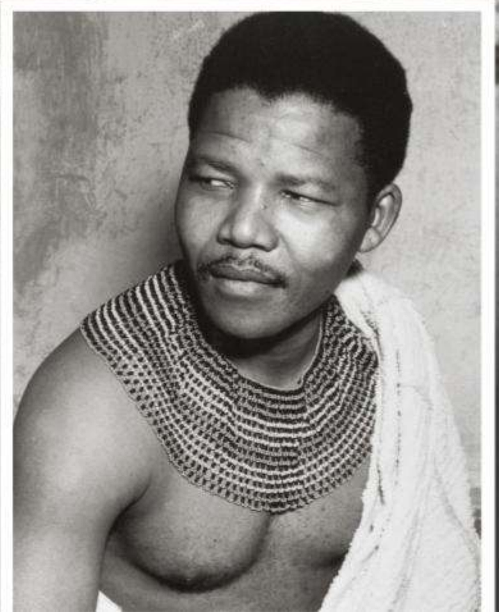
The events of 1960 – which became known as the Year of Africa – changed how the continent and its nations were perceived around the world for the better, and while many countries' post-colonial struggles are still ongoing, the events of 1960 lit a beacon not just for Africa, but for oppressed peoples across the globe to strive towards equality and independence from colonialism. That journey continues today.



Mandela's Revolution

Before he became a
prisoner of conscience
and a beloved Nobel
laureate, young Nelson
Mandela abandoned the
ideals of non-violence for
a guerilla revolution

On 26 May 1948, roughly one million white South Africans went to the polls to cast ballots in parliamentary elections. Their decision was between the incumbent Union Party, which had thrust South Africans into a wildly unpopular World War II, and an upstart coalition of right-wing nationalists called the Reunited National Party (NP). Although no blacks and few mixed-race South Africans participated, the vote was a naked referendum on race. D F Malan, the NP leader, ran on a platform of institutionalized apartheid or 'apart-hood', an aggressive credo of racial segregation and white dominion. Jan Smuts, the sitting prime minister, fumbled over the 'black question', proposing a series of murky ideas involving racial integration. White Afrikaners, the descendants of Dutch-speaking settlers who fought two bloody land wars with the British, were sick of supporting the Crown and saw the Union Party as itslackeys. It's no accident that apartheid is an Afrikaans word – racial segregation was key to Afrikaner



The laws that divided a country

Educational apartheid

Education under apartheid was separate and wildly unequal. Under the 1953 Bantu Education Act, schools and universities were labelled either 'white' or 'tribal' and all were put under direct government control. Spending on black schools was one-tenth of that invested in white education, resulting in hundreds of black schools without electricity or running water. National Party leaders saw no need to spend money on an education that black South Africans would never use. A 1974 law forcing black students to learn Afrikaans as well as English was the spark that ignited the 1976 Soweto Uprising that resulted in hundreds of deaths, many of them high school students.

Medical apartheid

From the early days of Dutch and British colonial rule, there were two medical systems in South Africa: one for whites and one for blacks. The segregation of hospitals was so entrenched by 1948 that the National Party didn't need to write it into law; it was already the policy at every public medical facility in the country. When medical facilities were finally integrated in 1990, only 10 per cent of South Africa's five million whites were using public hospitals compared with 90 per cent of the country's 27 million blacks. The result was a huge surplus of beds in white hospitals and dangerous overcrowding in black facilities.

Sexual apartheid

Fears surrounding sexual 'impurity' have always fuelled the argument for segregation of the races. In white South Africa and elsewhere, the black man was portrayed as a deviant sexual animal with an insatiable appetite for white women. The South African parliament passed the Immorality Act in 1927, outlawing sexual relations between whites and blacks with a punishment of five years in jail for men and four years for women. Mixed marriages were banned outright in 1949 and amendments to the Immorality Act in 1950 and 1957 extended the prohibition to all coloured races and increased the jail time to seven years for anyone convicted of 'immoral or indecent acts.'

A young black man, in an act of resistance to apartheid, rides a bus reserved for whites

Nelson Mandela grabs some refreshments during a break in the Treason Trial in Pretoria, 1958

> "Mandela was handsome and unabashedly vain, insisting on the best suits from exclusive white tailors"

nationalism and its fervent belief in a white state.

Apartheid won the day. The conservative NP joined forces with the ultra-nationalist Afrikaner Party to take an eight-seat majority in parliament and Malan ascended to prime minister. Afrikaners saw the victory as nothing short of a declaration of independence, from Britain and from blacks. "For the first time since Union," declared Malan, "South Africa is our own." By 1948, the oppression and subjugation of the black majority in South Africa was already a centuries-old story, but the rise of apartheid would further raise the stakes and set the scene for a confrontation between the government and those who believed that their country should be for all – people like Nelson Mandela.

Mandela was speechless when he first heard the election results. The 29-year-old activist and law student had believed that South Africa was on the cusp of a very different kind of change. In America, legal challenges to segregation were being organised and in India Ghandi and his followers had used the tools of non-violent resistance and civil disobedience to overthrow centuries of British rule. Even with the NP in power, Mandela refused to assume the worst from the nationalist regime, but this meant that he initially underestimated the fervour with which the white power structure would clamp down on black freedoms.

Raised in a tiny Xhosa village in the remote Transkei region, Mandela had arrived in the black townships of Johannesburg only seven years before those fateful 1948 elections, a college dropout escaping an arranged marriage. After a brief stint as a night watchman in the mines, Mandela the country boy had the good fortune to meet Walter Sisulu, a young real-estate agent who would grow to become one of Mandela's greatest mentors, supporters and, ultimately, his prison companion. Sisulu got Mandela a job as a clerk in a progressive Johannesburg law firm, one of the few that served both black and white clients and even introduced him to his future wife, when Mandela met his young cousin Evelyn; the couple married in 1944. It was in Sisulu's home in the black suburb of Orlando where Mandela first met the outspoken Zulu activist Anton Lembede, who would recruit the young idealist studying for a law degree and dreaming of his own practice to an organisation that would shape the rest of his life: the African National Congress (ANC).

The ANC was founded in 1912 to unify feuding African tribes in the struggle for black rights in the newly christened Union of South Africa. Decades before apartheid, the small, underfunded organization fought racist laws like the Urban Areas Act of 1923, which forced all black men to carry passbooks proving their identity. Failure to show your pass when entering a white district meant arrest and expulsion from the city. Right from the formation of the ANC there was internal debate over the most effective way to fight for change. In 1919, the ANC supported a militant strike of 70,000 miners north of Johannesburg, which was ultimately crushed by police and armed white civilians. In the aftermath, the ANC leadership chose a more diplomatic path, but these efforts were equally fruitless.

The ANC languished through much of the Twenties and Thirties as a stuffy, ineffective old-boys club. Anton Lembede planned to change all of that. He recruited Mandela and Sisulu to help him found a new youth wing of the ANC, a radically rebooted civil-rights organisation dedicated to the ideals of African nationalism. The group called for taking the fight to the streets in mass demonstrations and coordinated acts of civil disobedience. ANC president Alfred Xuma appreciated the enthusiasm of the young firebrands, but didn't want to scare off his supporters in white society as he was still trying to play the political game.

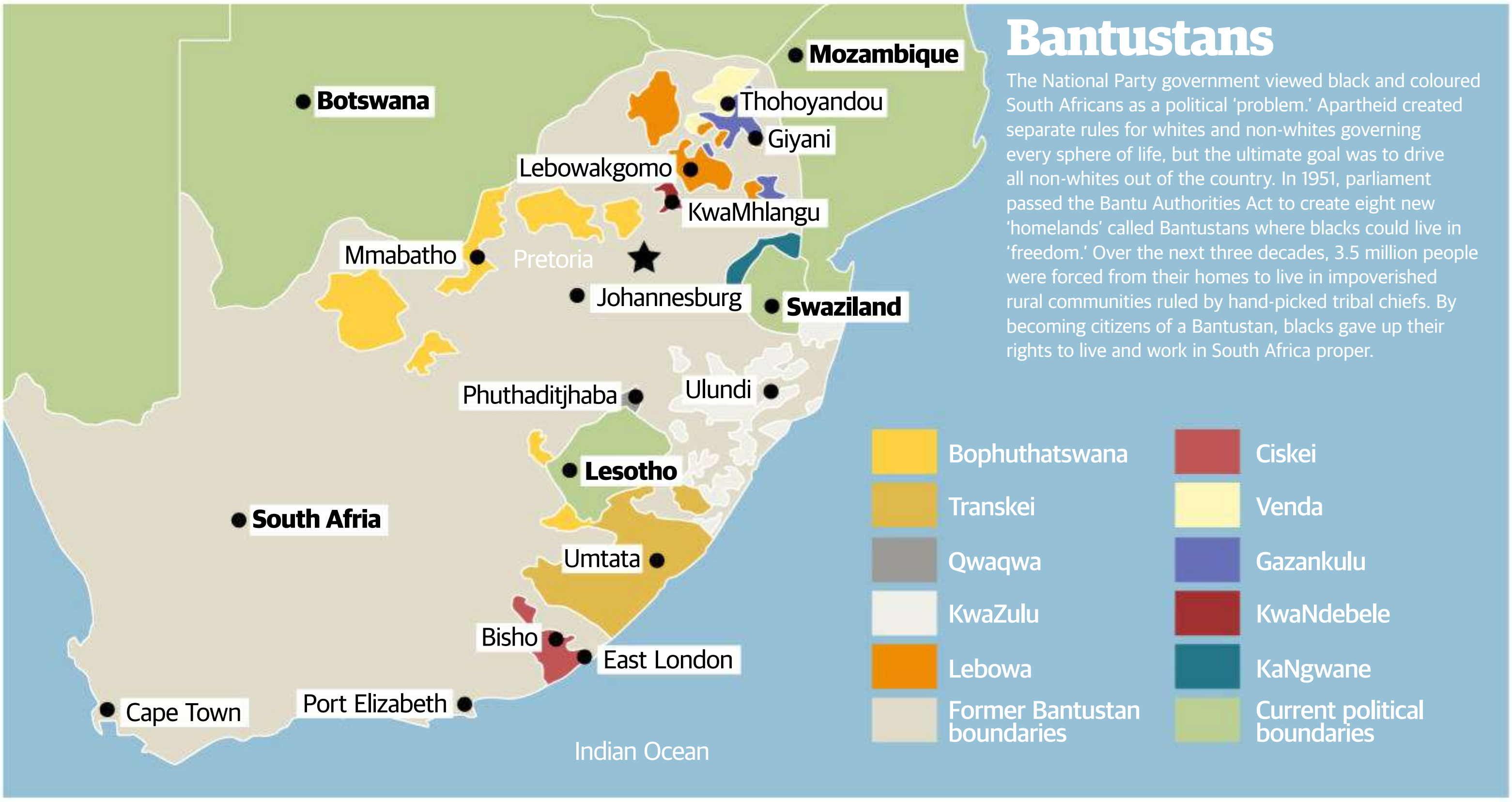
Despite some resistance from the ANC's old guard, the ANC Youth League officially launched in April 1944 with Lembede as president and Mandela, Sisulu and Oliver Tambo – a brilliant young teacher and organizer that Mandela knew from his school days – on the executive committee. Mandela wasn't a leader yet, just a tall, whip-smart activist swept up in the infectious personality of Lembede, the camaraderie of his friends, and the justness of the cause. The Youth League grew in prominence and influence within the ANC, but Mandela and his ideologue companions weren't the only organisation vying for the minds and hearts of oppressed South Africans. Communists and Indian groups were staging their own strikes and mass actions and recruiting some of the brightest young black activists to their cause. Mandela counted communists and Indians as friends, but fervently opposed any attempt to muddy the clear nationalist agenda of black Africans with 'foreign' ideologies.

Then came 1948 with Malan and his National Party coalition sweeping to power on a platform of harsh racial segregation. While the Youth League and ANC leaders quibbled over joining forces with rival opposition groups, the NP regime set out to legalise a far-reaching system of institutionalised apartheid. Malan and his ministers set the groundwork for a nationwide system of racial classification. Every citizen would be categorised as white, black, coloured or Indian and required to live and work in racially 'pure' sections of every city.

As the full scope and intensity of apartheid law became clear, Mandela and his Youth Leaguers acted with a new urgency. Together, they drew up plans for an ambitious Programme of Action. Despite the Youth League's resistance to foreign influence, the Programme of Action was inspired by passive resistance campaigns of the Indian Conference in 1946 and mine strikes organised by the communists. The Programme of Action called for an end to passive negotiation with the enemy and the launch of an active resistance campaign using tactics of non-violence, civil disobedience, boycotts and strikes. Mandela and the Youth League were vehement about non-violence as the only viable force of opposition. They knew that any attempt at armed insurgency would be brutally crushed by the regime and pave the way for even harsher apartheid restrictions. Mandela believed that passive resistance could apply the political and moral pressure to topple tyranny without resporting to violence.

Mandela was a staunch critic of apartheid and gave many speeches detailing its injustice

The annual ANC conference in 1949 marked a dramatic shift from the ANC as an association of old-guard liberalism into a radical revolutionary machine. The Youth Leaguers staged a coup, deposing the staid ANC president Xuma with a no-confidence vote and replacing him with a hand-picked successor. Mandela's good friend Sisulu was elected secretary-general of the revolutionised ANC and Tambo and other Youth Leaguers were called to executive roles. Mandela would soon join them



Bantustans

The National Party government viewed black and coloured South Africans as a political 'problem.' Apartheid created separate rules for whites and non-whites governing every sphere of life, but the ultimate goal was to drive all non-whites out of the country. In 1951, parliament passed the Bantu Authorities Act to create eight new 'homelands' called Bantustans where blacks could live in 'freedom.' Over the next three decades, 3.5 million people were forced from their homes to live in impoverished rural communities ruled by hand-picked tribal chiefs. By becoming citizens of a Bantustan, blacks gave up their rights to live and work in South Africa proper.

on the ANC's front lines.

Today's public perception of Mandela is of a patient peacemaker and master strategist who wrought unthinkable concessions from his worst enemies and displayed amazing forgiveness towards them. However, it is worth noting that the Mandela of the late Forties and early Fifties was a mere player in a much larger struggle for black freedom - but that's not to say that he didn't stand out. At 183 centimetres tall (6 feet), he towered over the other black intellectuals, jazz musicians, artists and activists packing the thriving cultural Johannesburg district of Orlando West. Mandela was handsome and unabashedly vain, insisting on the best suits from exclusive white tailors. He ran daily and trained as a boxer to improve his strength and physique, which became imposing.

Friends and associates from those early days describe him as supremely confident and charming, but also somewhat distant and aloof. He didn't drink with the other activists in the raucous underground bars called shebeens and spoke with a reserved formality fitting of his chiefly upbringing in the Transkei. But Mandela's polite formality belied an innate fearlessness. The same fearless streak that drew him into the boxing ring would suit Mandela well during the increasingly heated opposition to the apartheid regime.

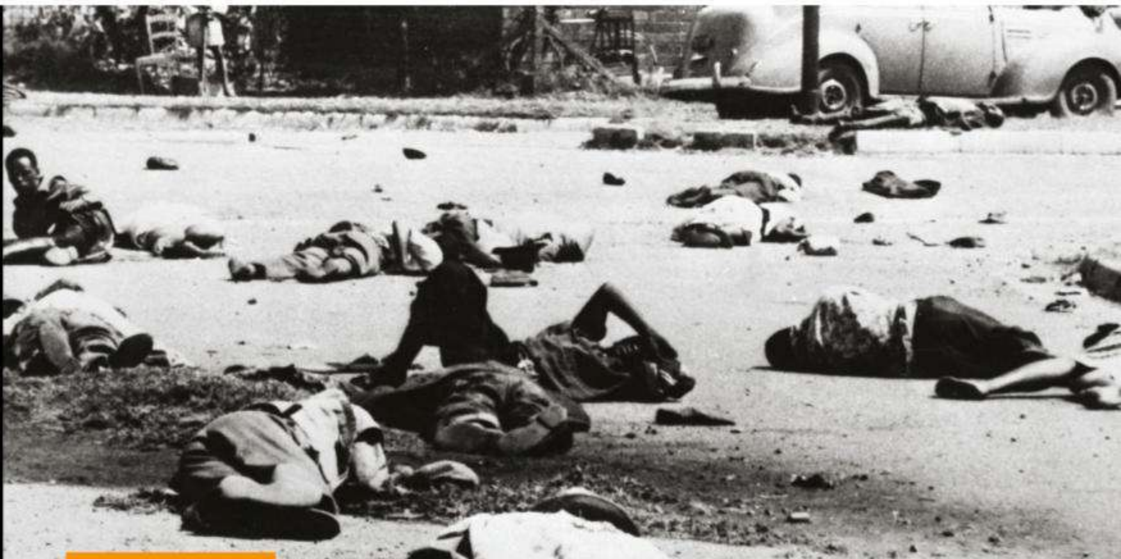
In 1951, Mandela was elected national president of the Youth League, his first taste of real power. At the ANC convention, Mandela's friend Sisulu, still the secretary-general, proposed a non-violent Defiance Campaign against the flood of oppressive race laws. The ANC would demand that the government repeal certain laws that made black South Africans feel like prisoners in their own country. When the regime refused, they would take to the streets in mass actions of passive resistance and civil disobedience. By this point, both Mandela and the larger ANC had abandoned their fierce African nationalism and embraced the idea of a united front against apartheid that included a coalition of leading communist and Indian opposition groups. When Mandela spoke of South Africa's future, he spoke of freedom for all "non-European" people, not just the black majority.

Mandela had high expectations for the Defiance Campaign and offered to serve as Volunteer-in-Chief. In this role, he travelled for months across black South Africa, knocking on doors and giving speeches to rally the masses to powerful acts of civil disobedience. The plan was simple; to organise groups of people to peacefully violate minor apartheid laws like curfew, get arrested and clog the prisons with the cause. The Defiance Campaign lasted six months, during which more than 8,000 people were arrested and jailed for non-violent acts of civil disobedience. Getting arrested became a badge of honour. Membership in the ANC exploded and Mandela was awarded much of the credit for the best-organised and most effective campaign in ANC history. His standing continued to grow.

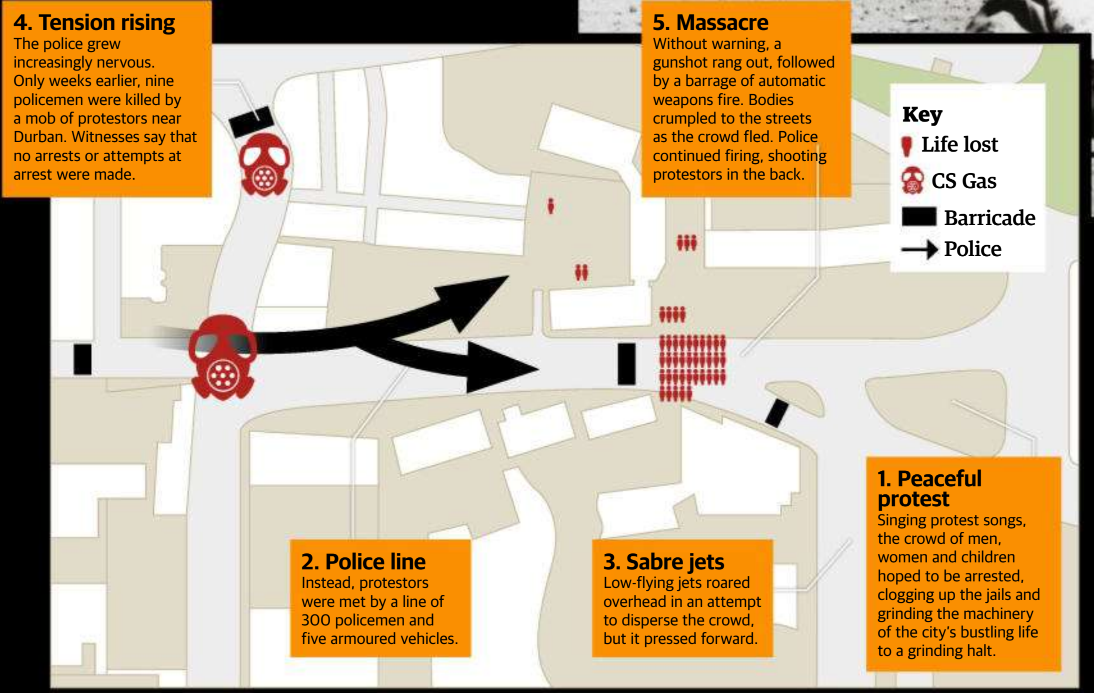
However, the celebrations were short-lived.

The Sharpeville Massacre

The passbook was one of the most hated signs of white rule in apartheid-era South Africa, with all black people required to carry and present the ID to authorities. The ANC decided to hold a mass demonstration against the pass on 31 March 1961, but a splinter group called the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) wanted to steal the ANC's thunder. The PAC hastily organized its own non-violent anti-pass demonstration on 21 March, calling for supporters to leave their passbooks at home and march on police stations to be arrested en masse. The PAC was less influential than the ANC, but organisers went door-to-door on the morning of 21 March, conscripting people to join the cause. By midday, a crowd of roughly 5,000 demonstrators marched on the Sharpeville police station south of Johannesburg.



The aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre in which 69 people lost their lives



1. Peaceful protest
Singing protest songs, the crowd of men, women and children hoped to be arrested, clogging up the jails and grinding the machinery of the city's bustling life to a grinding halt.

2. Police line
Instead, protestors were met by a line of 300 policemen and five armoured vehicles.

3. Sabre jets
Low-flying jets roared overhead in an attempt to disperse the crowd, but it pressed forward.

4. Tension rising
The police grew increasingly nervous. Only weeks earlier, nine policemen were killed by a mob of protestors near Durban. Witnesses say that no arrests or attempts at arrest were made.

5. Massacre
Without warning, a gunshot rang out, followed by a barrage of automatic weapons fire. Bodies crumpled to the streets as the crowd fled. Police continued firing, shooting protestors in the back.

Aftermath

Sixty-nine people were killed at Sharpeville and 180 wounded. Rather than admit fault, the government banned public gatherings, outlawed both the PAC and ANC, and passed a law that indemnified all police from civil lawsuits. In 1996, Mandela chose Sharpeville as the site to announce the signing of South Africa's first democratic constitution, and in 2012, work was completed on a memorial garden that contains the names of all who lost their lives.

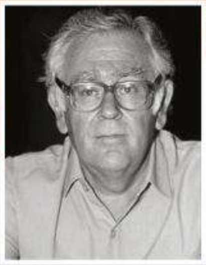
Key players in the battle for South Africa

Oliver Tambo

Oliver Tambo was a lifelong leader of the ANC and one of Mandela's most loyal partners in the fight against apartheid. With Mandela, Tambo helped found the ANC Youth League and create the 1949 Programme of Action that transformed the ANC from an isolated political organisation into a radical liberation movement. Tambo and Mandela founded a law firm to advocate for the poor and were arrested countless times for staging protests and breaking apartheid laws. After the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, Tambo and the ANC went into exile, forging key partnerships with other African nations. Tambo headed for London to mobilise opposition to apartheid. He lived there until he retuned to South Africa in 1991, to attend the first ANC national conference inside South Africa in three decades, where he was elected National Chairperson. He died from a stroke in 1993.

Daniel Francois Malan

DF Malan was a leading figure in the National Party's rise to power in South African politics and a founding father of apartheid. An Afrikaner, Malan fought hard for the rights of white South Africans, both against the remnants of Dutch and British colonial rule and the black 'natives.' Malan was the first editor of *Die Burger*, the NP newspaper, and held high government posts when the party seized power in the Twenties. Malan defected to form his own 'purified' nationalist party, campaigning on a platform of institutionalised apartheid in 1948, winning 86 of the 150 seats in parliament. During his six and a half years as prime minister Malan passed numerous apartheid laws and when he eventually retired in 1954, aged 80, apartheid had been firmly established and his successors carried on down the same path.



Joe Slovo

The Jewish communist was a close ally of Mandela and a commanding officer in the Spear of the Nation. Slovo first met Mandela at Wits University, when a young Mandela wanted nothing to do with communists and other 'foreign' influences. The two ended up fierce allies in the fight of 'the people' against the oppressive rule of apartheid. Both men were repeatedly arrested and banned from public appearances and went underground to plan acts of sabotage against the regime. When Mandela was imprisoned, Slovo went into exile in Britain and elsewhere, returning in 1990 to negotiate an end to apartheid.

Hendrik Verwoerd

Known as the chief architect of apartheid, HF Verwoerd served as minister of native affairs under Malan and eventually as the seventh prime minister of South Africa. As minister of native affairs, Verwoerd was instrumental in crafting the most insidious apartheid laws, including the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act and the Pass Laws Act. As prime minister, he engineered the forced relocation of blacks in 'homelands' and the reclassification of white South Africa as its own Republic. After surviving two bullets to the face in 1960, Verwoerd was fatally stabbed six years later.

The National Party responded to the insolence of the opposition with mass arrests – Mandela included – on charges of 'communism'. Found guilty, the men received a suspended sentence of nine months of hard labour, which they never served. However, the government imposed strict bans on Mandela and 51 other ANC leaders. They were forbidden to attend meetings with more than one person or even leave Johannesburg without police permission. Meanwhile, parliament passed new laws against deliberate lawbreaking carrying sentences of years in prison and even flogging - a brutal punishment that illustrated just how archaic the white government was.

The bans effectively sidelined Mandela from active involvement in the ANC for the next two years and he fell back on his day job. Somehow, while dedicating countless hours to the Youth League, Mandela managed to earn his law degree. In August 1952, together with Oliver Tambo, Mandela rented a cramped space in downtown Johannesburg and opened the law offices of Mandela & Tambo, the first and only black law partnership in South Africa. The pair swapped fighting the cruelties and absurdities of apartheid from the streets to the courts.

The stairs leading to their office were packed day and night with poor Africans desperate for an advocate against unjust laws. As Mandela recounts in his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*: "...it was a crime to walk through a Whites Only door, a crime to ride a Whites Only bus, a crime to use a Whites Only drinking fountain, a crime to walk on a Whites Only beach, a crime to be on the streets past eleven, a crime not to have a pass book and a crime to have the wrong signature in that book, a crime to be unemployed and a crime to be employed in the wrong place, a crime to live in certain places and a crime to have no place to live."

Mandela proved a capable and charismatic courthouse lawyer, while Tambo - the more reserved and studious of the two - handled the legal research. With his tailored suits, imposing physical stature and handsome grin, Mandela the crusading lawyer earned a celebrity following in black Johannesburg and an army of enemies in the white establishment. He was routinely followed by plainclothes government security officers and barred from leaving Johannesburg for important cases. Despite Mandela and Tambo's pioneering legal work, the police state was hugely effective at smothering organised opposition. Isolated from other banned ANC leaders, Mandela feared an all-out ban on its existence. The ANC, he decided, needed to have a plan to go underground. In 1953, Mandela crafted the so-called 'M-Plan' that called for an underground network of secret ANC cells across South Africa. While the M-Plan was never implemented, it set the groundwork for the not-too-distant day when Mandela and his freedom fighters would be driven into the shadows.

When Malan's National Party strengthened its position in parliament in the 1953 general election it became clear that the United Party were failing to propose a viable alternative to apartheid. The ANC called for all enemies of apartheid, regardless of race or creed or political ideology, to convene in a massive Congress of the People. The mission of this Congress was to produce a Freedom Charter, a 'constitution' that called for racial equality and liberty in South Africa. The Congress met in 1955 with Mandela in secret attendance.

As the Freedom Charter was read in three languages, approving cries of "Afrika!" reverberated from the 3,000 delegates in attendance. However,

Mandela's Prisons

1. Robben Island 1962-1982

For 18 excruciating years, Mandela slept on a thin straw mat on the concrete floor of a bare cell measuring 2.1 by 2.4 meters (7 by 8 feet). After the Rivonia trial, where Mandela and nine ANC compatriots were found guilty of sabotage, the men were flown to Robben Island, a remote prison for political enemies and common criminals since the mid-16th century. For the first year, Mandela was woken at 5:30am, given a bucket of cold water to wash, fed a breakfast of corn mush and led into the courtyard, where he would spend all day – with breaks for two more bowls of mush and grisly meat – hammering stone into gravel. Conversation was forbidden, but Mandela was allowed to read law texts at night before retiring under the perpetual blaze of a naked 40-watt bulb. In 1965, Mandela began labouring in the lime quarry in the relentless heat of summer and the bone-chilling cold of winter. The burning glare from the quarry walls damaged his eyesight.

2. Pollsmoor Prison 1982-1988

Despite the backbreaking labour and wretched conditions on Robben Island, Mandela was initially disappointed to be transferred to the modern mainland fortress of Pollsmoor Prison. During his 18 years on the island, Mandela had formed deep friendships with fellow prisoners and guards and missed the fresh air and camaraderie denied by the steel doors and closed quarters of Pollsmoor. But there were major improvements, too. Mandela was transferred to Pollsmoor with three close friends, including Walter Sisulu, and the four lived in a shared cell with a separate reading room and even a television. Eventually, the men were allowed to spend a portion of each day on a rooftop, where Mandela convinced the warden to give him steel drums and soil to plant a vegetable garden.

3. Victor Verster Prison 1988-1990

Arriving at Pollsmoor, Mandela complained about the prison's damp conditions. By 1988 he was regularly suffering coughing fits and unexplained vomiting. Transferred to a whites-only hospital and housed on his own floor, Mandela underwent an emergency operation to remove dark fluid from his lungs, an early sign of tuberculosis. Fearing that Mandela would become a worldwide martyr for the anti-apartheid cause if he was to die in prison and the news coverage it would cause, the authorities allowed him to recuperate in an expensive private hospital. Then, instead of shipping him back to Pollsmoor, the regime transferred Mandela to the low-security Victor Verster Prison outside Cape Town. The conditions were vastly different to those he had experienced since 1962. Mandela wasn't confined to a cell, but given one of the guard's private cottages which afforded him much more space than he was used to. Still, even though it had all the trappings of home, nothing could hide the fact that his cottage was still a prison. Gratefully, it would be his last.

M. DULLAB
DRY CLEANER
& DYERS Depot
FINEST
CRAFTSMANSHI
CONCERT

Two men hide from the police in Johannesburg, 1955. If caught without a pass, black citizens were subject to arrest

> “The government tried to paint the accused as communist plotters aiming to topple the regime through violent uprising”

on the second day of meetings, armed Afrikaner detectives raided the meeting hall and seized the microphone, telling all in attendance that they were part of an investigation into acts of treason. Most in the ANC dismissed this as a publicity stunt and few took the investigation seriously. However, early on a December morning in 1956 Mandela awoke to the banging of fists on his door and was met with three white policemen with a warrant for his arrest on charges of high treason. It wasn't an isolated event. Over 155 ANC leaders and Congress attendees of all races were rounded up, arrested, and held for two weeks before the infamous Treason Trial began.

Using more than 12,000 documents collected during a three-year investigation, including snippets of public speeches and the text of the Freedom Charter itself, the government tried to paint the accused as communist plotters aiming to topple the regime through violent uprising. The trial was rife with incompetent testimony and flimsy evidence, ultimately failing to convict Mandela and his co-defendants, but the criminal proceedings stretched on for an interminable five years and the ANC directed much of its efforts to raising money for their defence.

Early in the Treason Trial, Mandela returned home from the courtroom to find that his personal life was also in turmoil as Evelyn, his wife and mother of his two young children, had left. Soon after the divorce, Mandela fell in love with a charming 22-year-old social worker named Winnie Nomzamo Madikizela. Sixteen years younger than Mandela, Winnie was exceptionally bright — the first black social worker hired at Baragwanath Hospital — and fascinated by fashion, not politics. She was smitten by Mandela the handsome lawyer, not Mandela the political firebrand. Winnie, who also grew up in the Transkei, was in awe of Mandela's chiefly carriage. Despite objections from Winnie's family the two married in 1958 during a break in the Treason Trial. Unlike Evelyn, Winnie would eventually be drawn deeply to politics and earn her own fame and controversy.

In 1958, Hendrik Verwoerd, minister of native affairs under Malan and proud architect of apartheid, took over as prime minister and parliament passed the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act in 1959, which aimed to drive blacks entirely out of white South Africa. As this move to further segregate the country played out, the Treason Trial involving Mandela and other ANC leaders droned on and ideological rifts in the ANC - never far from the surface - broke out between those who saw black statehood as the ultimate goal and those who believed in a free and equal South Africa for all. This eventually led to leading Africanist Robert Sobukwe splitting from the ANC to form the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1959. The rivalry between the two opposition groups would lead to the hasty organisation of a PAC-sponsored protest march in Sharpeville, a Johannesburg suburb, in 1960, which ended in the police massacre of unarmed black protestors.

The Sharpeville Massacre brought the simmering conflict between the NP regime and the black opposition to a boiling point. Expecting an outpouring of anger against the killings, Verwoerd took the offensive, issuing a State of Emergency and detaining 18,000 people deemed enemies of the state. In the process, both the ANC and PAC were banned outright. If there was ever a time to implement Mandela's M-Plan and go underground, this was it, but with 2,000 ANC leaders among the detained, there was too much confusion to do so.

The Treason Trial finally ended in March 1961 with all charges dropped against Mandela and the 29 others accused. Faced with the constant threat of bans, arrests and more trumped-up charges, Mandela decided that he would be most effective to the cause by going underground. After a tearful goodbye with Winnie, he left his home and family and entered one of the darkest and

Nelson Mandela emerges from the court after his acquittal in the Treason Trial

"For Mandela, the struggle for a free South Africa was no longer political: it was a matter of life and death"

most transformative phases of his life. Moving from safehouse to safehouse, Mandela put all of his efforts into organising a peaceful, three-day stay-at-home strike and arranged secret meetings with the South African press, who began to recognise him as the unofficial mouthpiece of the underground revolution. When the day of the strike arrived, however, the regime responded with an impressive military show of force. Crushed, Mandela cancelled the strike after a single day.

Soon after this the despondent 43-year-old was interviewed by a journalist and warned: "If the government is to crush by force our non-violent demonstrations, we will have to seriously reconsider our tactics. In my mind, we are closing a chapter on this question of non-violent policy."

For Mandela, the struggle for a free South Africa was no longer political; it was a matter of life and death. If the regime was going to respond to strikes and protests with bayonets and machine guns, the opposition had a simple choice: take arms or die. Non-violence alone had reached its limits. White South Africa would need to be blasted out of its complacency. With a warrant out for his arrest, Mandela was branded as an outlaw, a label he wore with pride. From his safehouse he embraced his newfound militancy with a lawyer's zeal. He read every book he could find on armed revolution and guerrilla warfare but despite his change in attitude the practicalities were different; Mandela had never held a gun, let alone fired one.

Mandela's new militancy reflected other parts of the nation. By 1961, the PAC already had its own militant squad, as did the communists. Mandela was adamant that the time was ripe to organize a militant wing of the ANC. Publicly, the ANC would admit no ties to the guerila organisation, but the armed rebels would act in accordance with ANC leadership to achieve strategic political goals. Mandela the amateur military commander was now in charge of the ANC's fledgling sabotage squad, Umkhonto we Sizwe or 'Spear of the Nation,' best known by the initials MK.

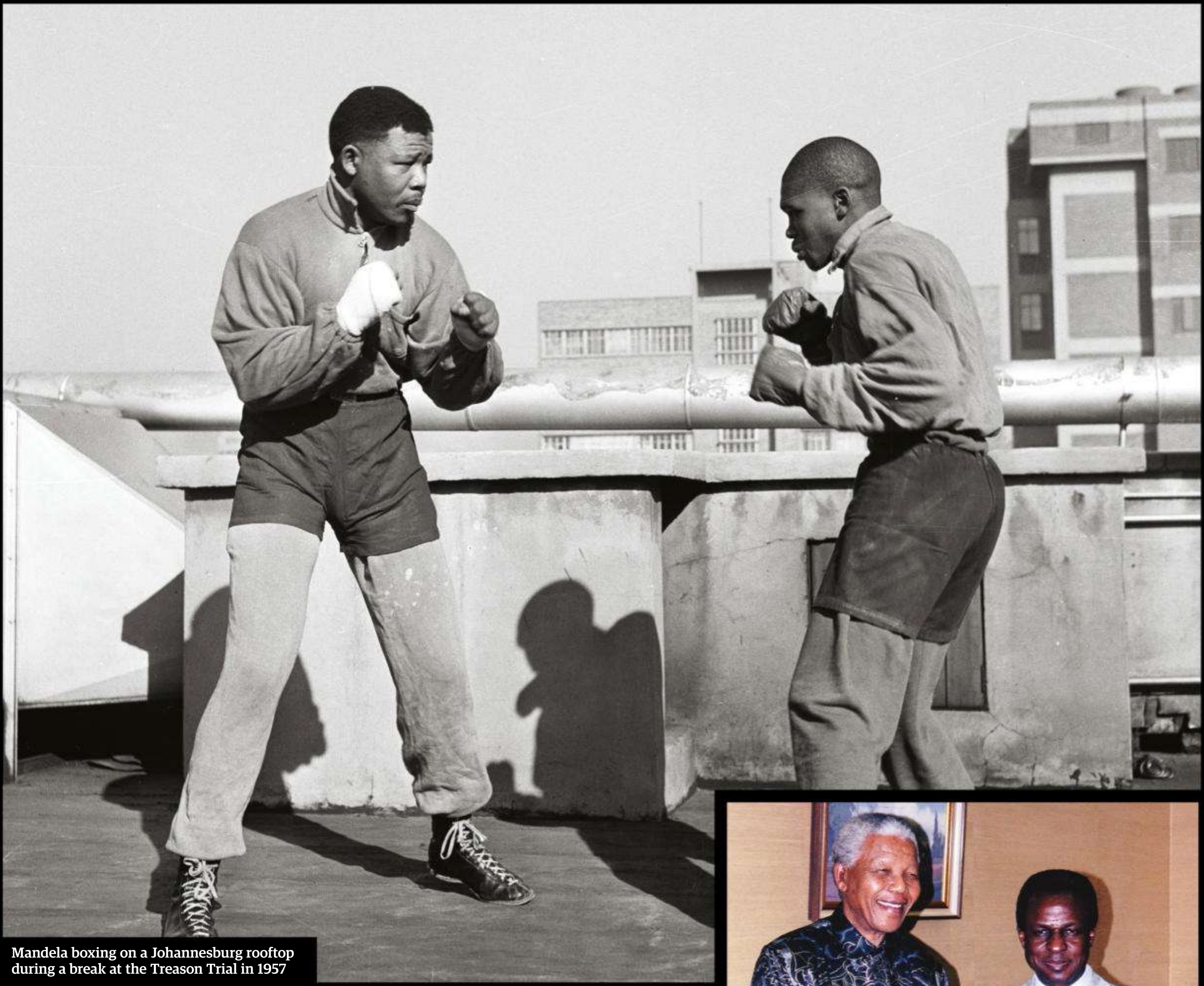
Mandela recruited Walter Sisulu and their white communist friend Joe Slovo as joint commanders of MK. The communists were crucial to the MK's success, since many of them had fought in WWII and had experience with guns and explosives. Wolfie Kodesh, another white communist ally, remembers accompanying Mandela on their first bomb test. Deep inside a Johannesburg brickworks, the men gingerly detonated a homemade canister bomb built by an experienced 'desert rat' named Jack Hodgson. After a misfire, the force of the explosion produced a mushroom cloud of dust. Convinced they would be caught by police, Mandela and Kodesh sped away in their '48 Chevy, giggling like schoolboys.

The first act of sabotage personally planned by commanders Mandela, Slovo and Sisulu occurred on 16 December 1961. The ragtag group of MK foot soldiers still knew very little about military tactics, but were anxious to make their presence felt. They vowed not to kill anybody, if possible, but to target the most visible institutions of apartheid. In three separate bombing attacks, MK targeted government offices across the country. The only casualty was one of the saboteurs, and the attacks did little to strike fear in the white populace, but Mandela thought it was a tremendous success.

The regime condemned the MK as communist terrorists and Mandela the activist lawyer was now effectively an underground rebel commander. With a price on his head, he went deeper into hiding, favouring a remote farm called Lilliesleaf in the Johannesburg suburb of Rivonia. When he travelled to meet ANC leaders and Winnie, he did so in disguise, sometimes as a chauffeur, a night watchman or a mechanic. The swooning press dubbed him the 'Black Pimpernel.'

With the blessing of the banned ANC leadership, Mandela slipped out of South Africa in late 1961 to garner support for the armed struggle. He received a hero's welcome at the Pan-African Freedom Conference in Ethiopia. In London, Tambo begged Mandela to stay there or travel to America, but he was insistent that he wanted to face his enemy head on. Mandela was as good as his word and returned to Africa to attend an intensive six-month military training camp in Ethiopia where he handled a pistol and automatic rifle for the first time and learned to make explosives.

While Mandela was away, back in South Africa, the PAC military wing had begun to assassinate whites out of retaliation for government crackdowns, something Mandela and the MK had vowed never to do. In response, the parliament passed the Sabotage Act in 1962, making any act of political sabotage, no matter how petty, a capital



Mandela boxing on a Johannesburg rooftop during a break at the Treason Trial in 1957

Jubilant scenes at Mandela's first ANC rally after his release

Mandela with Congolese politician Emmanuel Dungia in 1997

Road to freedom: Why Mandela was freed

FREE MANDELA

FreedomFest 11 June 1988

In 1988 more than a billion people worldwide tuned in to watch a star-studded 11-hour concert celebrating Mandela's seventieth birthday. Live acts included some of the biggest pop stars of the day and several prominent African musicians. Promoter Tony Hollingsworth and the British Anti-Apartheid Movement spearheaded the organisation of the event at London's Wembley Stadium, which proved a logistical and political nightmare. At first, musicians refused to commit unless the bill was stuffed with A-list acts. Once the acts were booked, Hollingsworth had to negotiate between ANC leaders demanding a politically-charged event and Western broadcasters who wanted to strip the concert of any overtly anti-apartheid messaging. In the end, the concert was promoted as a pro-freedom rally celebrating Mandela's birthday, but political speeches were banned. With violent clashes on the news, the viewers clearly understood the political significance of the concert. The event helped bring the anti-apartheid movement into the world's living rooms.

Internal resistance to apartheid
Seventies and Eighties

For South Africans, Mandela's imprisonment was symbolic of the larger oppression and subjugation of blacks under apartheid. As Mandela rose to prominence as a prisoner of conscience, his name and image were invoked by organisations intent on toppling the racist regime. Student groups like the South African Students' Movement were some of the first to stage mass protests and strikes like the Soweto Uprising of 1976, in which police shot 23 students dead in a mass revolt against the decree that black students learn Afrikaans in school. Labour unions were another force of internal resistance, particularly after black trade unions were legalised in 1979. Unions could effectively fill the vacuum left by banned political organisations and since unions met inside factory walls, they were immune to public meeting laws. Churches and religious coalitions were another powerful anti-apartheid force. Anglican bishop Desmond Tutu led the outcry as secretary-general of the South African Council of Churches, helping to earn him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his international call to conscience. Some white South Africans also rallied against apartheid. In parliamentary elections during the Seventies and Eighties, 15 to 20 per cent of whites voted for the Progressive Party, the only South African political party opposing apartheid.

While Mandela was imprisoned

Assassination of Verwoerd
Prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, is assassinated in the House of Assembly by an enraged parliamentary messenger. His National Party successors would gradually soften the regime's vice-like grip on power.
6 September 1966

Release Mandela campaign
ANC president Oliver Tambo, still in exile, launches an international campaign to free Mandela. The *Sunday Post* of Johannesburg circulates a public petition for his release, which is signed by dozens of South African opposition groups.
9 March 1980

Kennedy visit
U.S. senator Edward Kennedy, brother of JFK and RFK, visits South Africa and meets with anti-apartheid leaders like Winnie Mandela and Desmond Tutu, the Nobel Peace Prize recipient in 1984.
January 1985

1966
1970
1975
1980
1981
1982
1983
1984
1985

Soweto Uprising
20,000 students take to the streets to protest the obligatory use of Afrikaans in classroom instruction alongside English. Heavily armed riot police kill hundreds, mostly teenagers. In the aftermath, the ANC rises to power as a student-organising group.
16 June 1976

Release of first political prisoner
Breyten Breytenbach, a white anti-apartheid activist convicted of treason, is released early from his life sentence after a massive international campaign. The Botha government starts to quietly reassess its strict policy on political prisoners.
2 December 1982

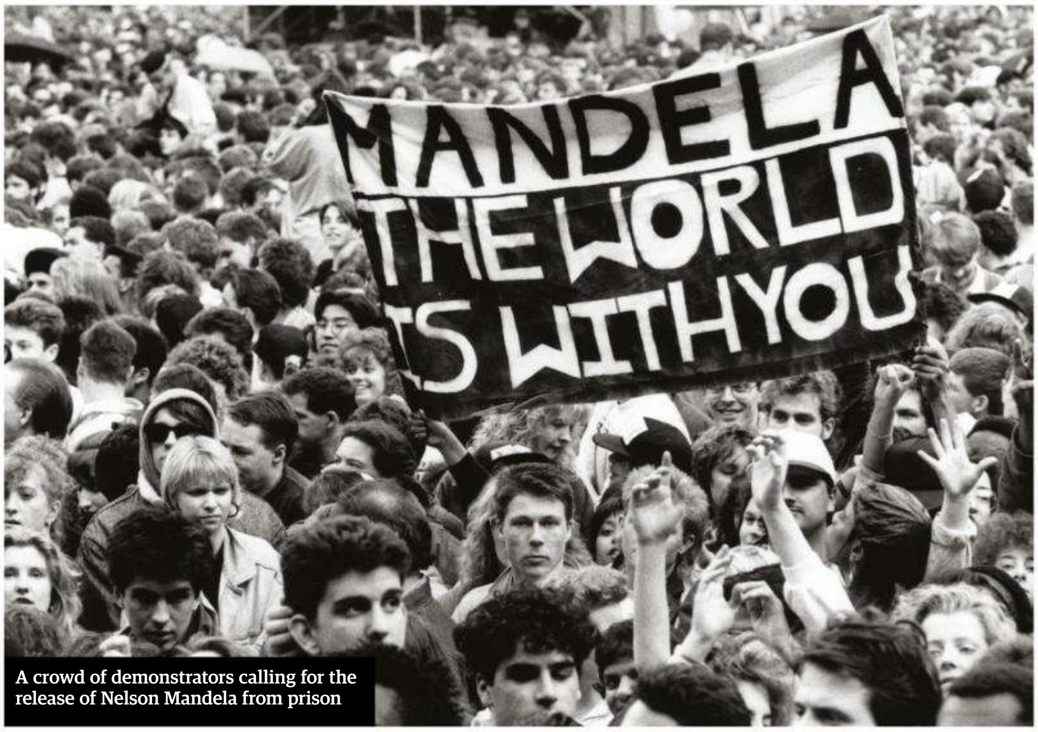
Coetsee meets Mandela
Minister of justice Kobie Coetsee appears at Mandela's hospital bed while the imprisoned leader recovers from prostate surgery. Together, they begin to forge a compromise by which the ANC would retreat from violence in exchange for relaxing apartheid laws.
15 August 1985

Economic sanctions 1986

The United Nations were an early and vocal opponent of apartheid and in 1963 called on all member states to stop shipments of arms, ammunition and military vehicles. However, calls for further economic sanctions met resistance, particularly from the US and UK, which held longstanding political and economic ties with the ruling regime. British prime minister Margaret Thatcher labelled the ANC and its supporters "terrorists." The Eighties saw increased TV news coverage of apartheid resistance, and many US corporations, colleges and universities pulled investments. The most devastating economic blow came when the US Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in 1986. President Ronald Reagan claimed they hurt the very people the US was trying to help and vetoed the bill, but the Congress voted to override his decision. The South African economy lost hundreds of millions of pounds each year in global investment until sanctions were repealed in 1991.

F W de Klerk 2 February 1990

In his first address to parliament after assuming the presidency de Klerk shocked his supporters and critics by unbanning the ANC and other opposition groups and announcing the imminent release of Mandela from prison. De Klerk was an unlikely ally for the ANC. Born to National Party royalty he rose to prominence as an old-school Afrikaner politician but ultimately came to see apartheid as an unsustainable solution. De Klerk initially supported the Bantustan campaigns to relocate blacks to 'native' homelands, but admitted that whites made a mistake by retaining too much land. As sanctions mounted and shifting global politics threatened to further isolate the country economically, he decided that the only way to save his country was to transition to an open democratic society. In negotiations with Mandela, before and after his release, de Klerk fought hard against the socialist-communist factions within the ANC and won support for a free-market economic policy. In 1993 he shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Mandela for his role in ending apartheid.



A crowd of demonstrators calling for the release of Nelson Mandela from prison

US sanctions
After a delegation of 13 US congressmen is denied permission to visit Mandela, the Senate passes a comprehensive sanctions bill aimed at crippling the South African economy. President Reagan tries to veto it, but is overruled.
July 1986

Mandela's mentor freed
The new president of South Africa, de Klerk, releases Mandela's political mentor, Walter Sisulu, and seven other prominent Robben Island prisoners a month after succeeding Botha. Their release is a clear sign that the South African government realises the current situation in their country is untenable and that the ANC has to be allowed to reenter the political system.
October 1989

1986 1987 1988 1989 1990

Mandela has tea with Botha
The world's most famous prisoner is snuck through the back door of the president's residence for tea and conversation. Botha serves Mandela, a remarkable gesture in apartheid South Africa, and the path to peace is begun.
5 July 1989

De Klerk lifts ban on the ANC
After months of secret negotiations with Mandela, president de Klerk addresses parliament and calls for the immediate lifting of the ban on the ANC, an end to the state of emergency and the release of Nelson Mandela.
2 February 1990

Mandela released from prison
11 February 1990

By 4pm, thousands of ecstatic supporters packed the small plaza outside of Victor Verster prison where Mandela had been kept since 1988. The crowd were there to catch a glimpse of their 'king,' but few even knew what he looked like anymore. The 71-year-old Mandela hadn't had a photo taken in 27 years and this unknown quality has added to his legend. Then, a tall, stately figure with salt-and-pepper hair, wearing a prim grey suit, stepped through the prison gates and into the blazing South African summer sun. At first, Mandela looked overwhelmed; after nearly three decades in solitude, he was thrust into the spotlight, watched by millions the world over. Then with one hand clasped in Winnie's, Mandela raised a fist into the air in a defiant and proud ANC salute. The crowd roared, Mandela smiled, and the prisoner took his first steps on a journey to becoming South Africa's first black president.

crime. Mandela knew that a return to South Africa meant almost certain arrest or even death, but he made little effort to disguise his identity when he crossed the border, wearing only military khakis and a patchy beard of a Sixties revolutionary.

As he must have known would happen, on 5 August 1962, Mandela's transport from Durban to Johannesburg was overtaken by police and he was arrested and charged with incitement to strike and leaving the country without a passport. In one of the most memorable and theatrical moments of his public life, he appeared in the Pretoria courthouse bare-chested wearing his native Xhosa garb, a leopard-skin kaross draped over one shoulder.

Mandela freely admitted to his crimes, but used the platform to deliver an hour-long speech justifying his actions in the name of revolutionary democracy. He was found guilty and sentenced to five years of imprisonment, at the time the harshest sentence handed down for a political offence in South Africa. After six months in Pretoria prison, Mandela was transferred to Robben Island. While serving his sentence of hard labour there, police investigators hunted down his MK co-conspirators at the farm hideout in Rivonia. The careless revolutionaries, Mandela included, had left a treasure trove of documents implicating themselves in the planning and execution of acts of sabotage and guerilla warfare against the regime.

Mandela was transferred from the Robben Island prison back to the same Pretoria courtroom in October 1963 to face capital charges related to 221 acts of sabotage. He was joined in the Rivonia Trial by Sisulu and nine other MK members. The evidence against the saboteurs was overwhelming, but the most damning testimony came from Bruno Mtolo, a former saboteur who struck a plea deal and recounted detailed conversations with Mandela and his co-conspirators.

In lieu of a defence strategy, Mandela delivered one of the most famous speeches of his life. Mandela's 'Speech from the Dock' lasted four unbroken hours, detailing his beatific life in the Transkei, the blind nationalism of his early activism, his evolution to all-inclusive opposition, and his ultimate abandonment of the principles of non-violence in the face of brutal oppression.

Mandela famously concluded his speech with the following words: "During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal, which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die." Mandela did not ultimately die for that ideal, but he would lose the next 27 years of his life to imprisonment because of it before he could take his first faltering steps as a free man. His steps may have been shaky, but he was walking out to a South Africa that was on the cusp of a seismic change, and a change that would see him at its very heart.

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Africa's forgotten war

For two years Ethiopia and Eritrea fought over a rugged border in what became the 20th century's last great conventional war. But the question remains: who won?

The 1990s offered little respite for Africa, with bloodshed and disorder carving a destructive path from Freetown to Mogadishu. As the decade neared its end one of the continent's youngest states was proving to be a difficult neighbour. Eritrea gained its independence in 1993 after 32 years of struggle against Ethiopia, which had itself almost collapsed following the overthrow of its Soviet-backed Marxist Derg regime in 1985 and the subsequent internal conflicts that followed.

When Eritrea's tough freedom fighters, clad in their iconic leather sandals, seized the colonial city of Asmara in 1991, a new state was cobbled together under the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) and its taciturn strongman Isaias Afwerki. But as ideal as the country's territory looked on the map – flanked by the Red Sea on one side and a tranquil land border with Sudan on the other – Eritrea was soon bickering with neighbouring countries over unclaimed land, first with Djibouti over their overlapping geography, next with Yemen because of uninhabited islands, and then with its former nemesis Ethiopia, as a new border couldn't be drawn up between them.

The borders of Eritrea and Ethiopia did resemble a jagged scrawl on any map. Stretching almost 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) from end to end, it followed a colonial-era boundary that didn't reflect the region's demographics. During the 1970s the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which was perhaps the finest guerrilla army since the Viet Minh, sought to roll back the Derg regime's control over its homeland. Eritrean resistance began as a revolt against the late Emperor Haile Selassie's inept governance over the former Italian colony. The EPLF emerged from a collection of rebel groups with a pan-Eritrean nationalist agenda. Even the Australian novelist Thomas Keneally, who undertook a precarious trip to Eritrea in the 1980s, couldn't stop himself from praising the organisation's civic virtues and unfailing discipline. The Eritrean patriots he met dug caves out of mountainsides to turn them into hospitals

To prosecute the war, Ethiopia mobilised thousands of reservists and militiamen, who were thrown straight into battle. Many perished during the conflict

> “In what proved the most intense fighting in East Africa since WWII, the Ethiopians sought to drive away the entrenched Eritreans with Soviet-vintage tanks and artillery, but these efforts were blunted by determined resistance”

and provided free schooling for the fighters, whose apparel was often made form sacks and assorted clothing.

As the EPLF’s power grew in the fortified mountains of northern Eritrea, it slowly forged an alliance with the Tigray dissidents in Ethiopia who were also chafing under the Derg’s harsh rule. When the EPLF finally drove back the Derg forces from Eritrea’s cities, the Tigrayan rebels launched the final push that drove the hated dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam into exile and supplanted the regime dominated by the Amhara ethnic group.

In that moment of tumult, two new countries were fashioned, and the near future looked promising. Prospects for trade and co-operation were good and Eritrea could possibly assume the role of transit hub for landlocked Ethiopia, which was now governed by Tigrayan reformists.

But the once-budding relationship soured over a town called Badme, located along the western edge of a border region known as the Yirga Triangle. Exactly where did this bothersome settlement fall? In the Eritrean capital Asmara the regime made it clear, through official statements and the local press, that Badme was Eritrean. Whatever the arguments, in May 1998 thousands of Eritrean troops converged on the town to enforce Asmara’s will just days after Ethiopian guards shot a delegation of visiting Eritrean officers. To nobody’s surprise, the arrival of thousands of Eritrean soldiers triggered a belligerent response from Ethiopia, and a protracted battle was soon underway. Within weeks the meagre air forces of both countries struck each other. Ethiopian jets attacked the airport in Asmara while the Eritreans bombed a school in the city of Mekelle.

In what proved the most intense fighting in East Africa since WWII, the Ethiopians sought to drive away the entrenched Eritreans with Soviet-vintage tanks and artillery, but these efforts were blunted by determined resistance. The Eritreans, whose veteran leadership had fought in the long and difficult struggle for independence, were not going to back down, and sent thousands more troops to the front. As the fighting dragged on for weeks, the international community barely mustered a response to this latest African quagmire. It had been just four years since the Rwandan genocide and in 1998 the drama of Kosovo's own struggle against Serbia commanded Western primetime news coverage.

But at the very least the United States, through its State Department, tried in vain to diffuse the war. A ceasefire drawn up with help from the Rwandan government sought to cool Asmara and Addis Ababa's grievances. Yet a settlement couldn't be agreed on beyond the promise of an 'air strike moratorium', where both capitals swore to avoid bombing each other's populated areas.

Fighting continued for the rest of the year as the armies hurled artillery rounds at each other from fixed positions, with the Eritreans using captured stocks of howitzers seized during the war of independence. As a means of further retaliation, mass deportations were carried out on Eritreans living in Ethiopia. Of course, Eritrea responded in kind by forcing Ethiopians to leave the country.

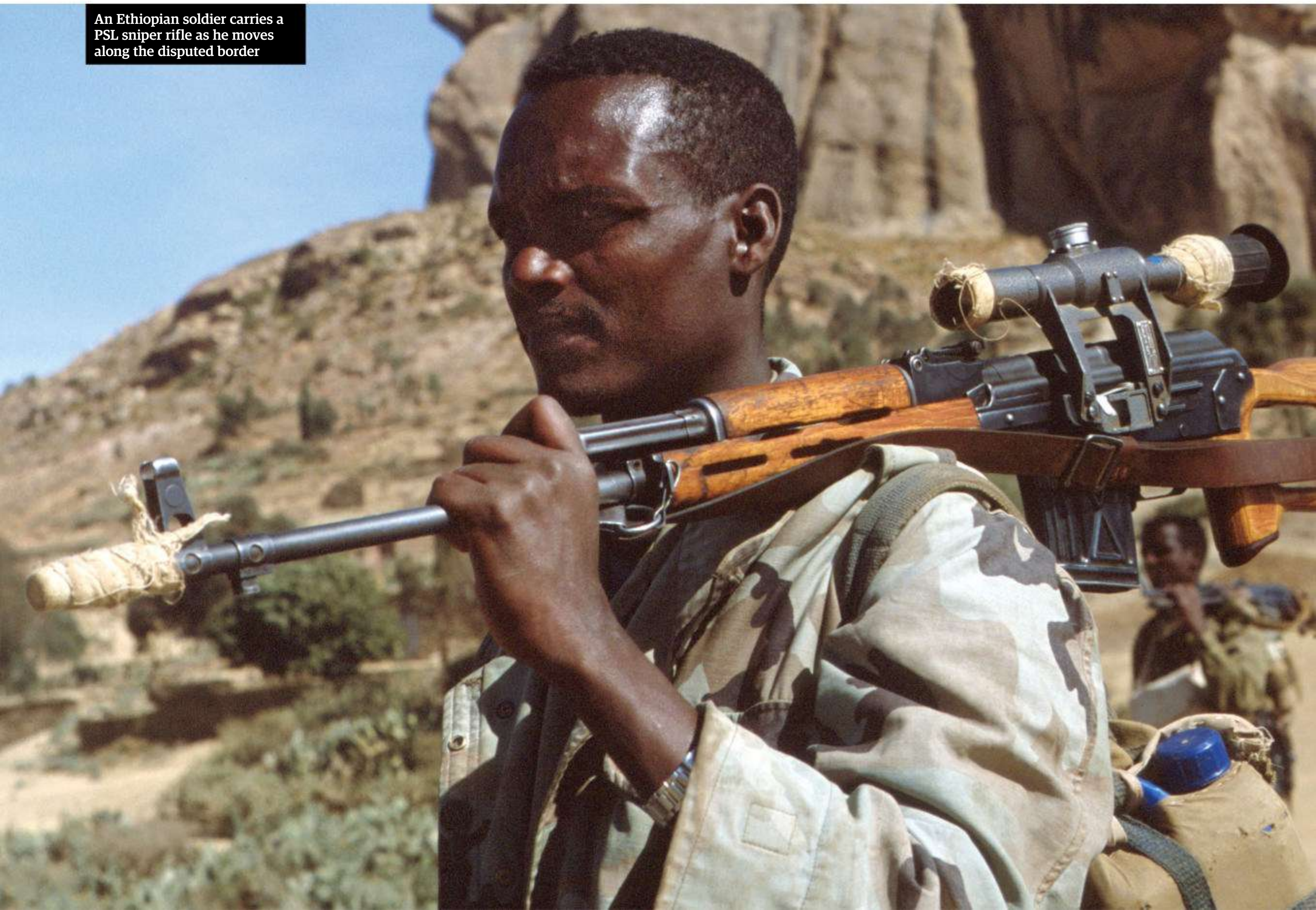
Operation Sunset

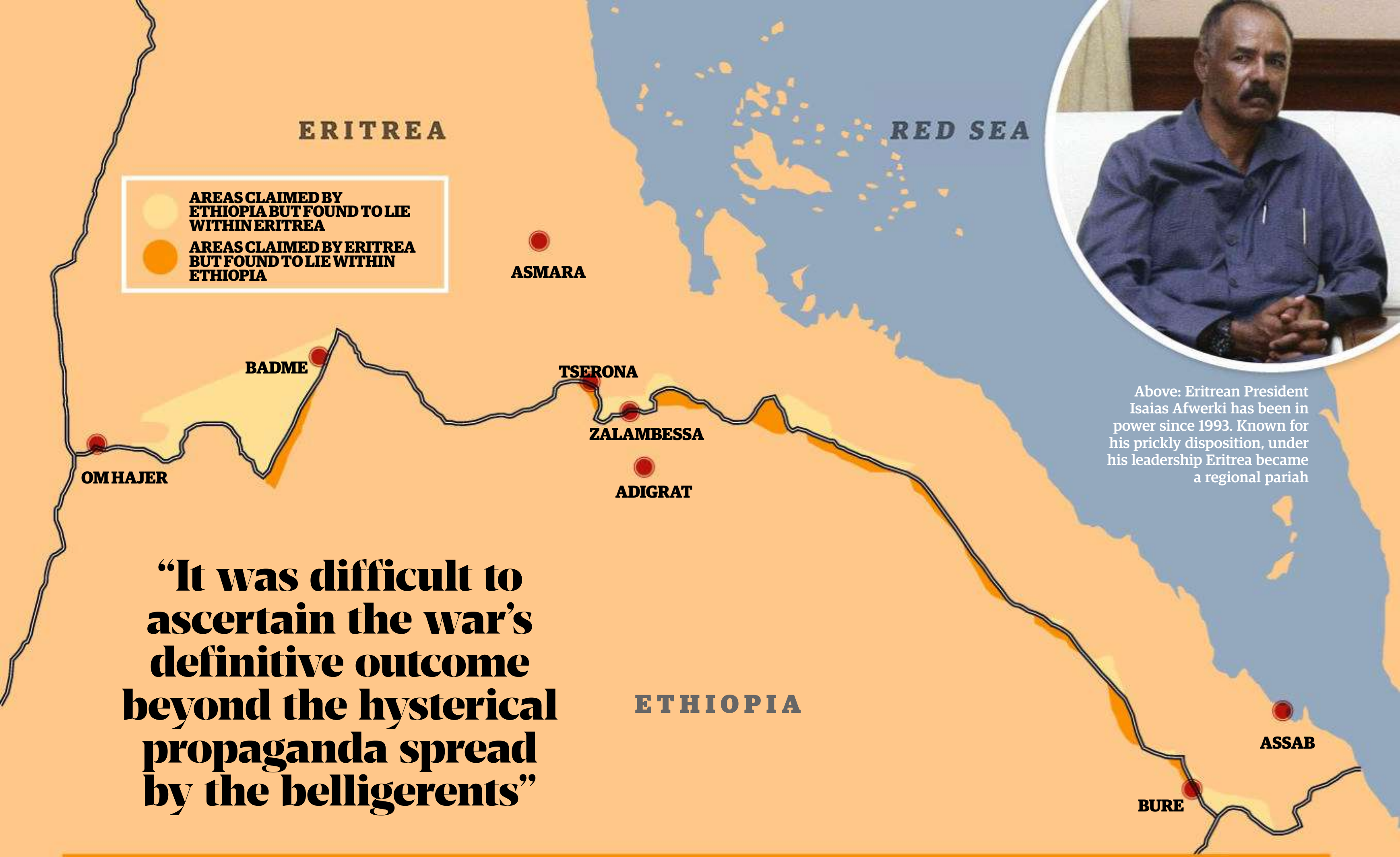
As the war dragged on for months, the penury of the belligerents had a strange effect on the actual fighting. At the time Eritrea was ranked among the ten poorest countries in the world. This was understandable, since its underdevelopment was caused by decades of civil strife. But to put its economy in perspective, Eritrea's only rail network – a late 19th-century relic from its colonial past under Italian administration – was revived by the persistent efforts of elderly workers with help from the army. Local industries were little more than sweatshops for basic goods and so little infrastructure was usable.

At the outbreak of the war, neighbouring Ethiopia had an annual GDP below $10 billion and half its population lived in poverty, but its size and positive demographics compensated for its underdevelopment. Under the leadership of Meles Zenawi and the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) relations with the West were restored and Addis Ababa was seen as a key actor in regional stability. But the unexpected border conflict with Eritrea dimmed its aspirations, and the state's precious supply of foreign exchange went to arms shipments from China and Eastern Europe. The biggest expense went to 14 advanced Sukhoi Su-27 multirole fighters. These twin-engine aircraft were seen as critical investments at a time when the Ethiopian air force's assorted MiGs were showing their age.

In 1999 the war entered a new phase, as Ethiopia had sufficiently mobilised its reserves and replenished its arsenal. It now had, on paper, 250,000 soldiers ready with hundreds of tanks and armoured vehicles. Not to be outdone, the Eritreans mustered an equal number and fielded heavy weapons cannibalised from leftover stocks from the war of independence. True to the egalitarian values of their independence movement, women were deployed alongside men in the Eritrean military, and foreign journalists grew a habit of mentioning how one-fifth of those conscripted for national service were women. Asmara also scrambled to strengthen its arsenal and imported vast quantities of munitions from Eastern Europe. Little could be done, however, to blunt Ethiopian airpower on the frontlines since there weren't sufficient anti-aircraft weapons available.

But Ethiopia's war plans quickly bogged down owing to its shabby logistics. Fleets of trucks had to be commissioned for transporting its manpower, who were often ill-trained and carried no rations, and when motor transport was lacking thousands of pack animals were gathered in long caravans


An Ethiopian soldier carries a PSL sniper rifle as he moves along the disputed border


ERITREA
RED SEA
AREAS CLAIMED BY ETHIOPIA BUT FOUND TO LIE WITHIN ERITREA
AREAS CLAIMED BY ERITREA BUT FOUND TO LIE WITHIN ETHIOPIA
ASMARA
BADME
TSERONA
ZALAMBESSA
OM HAJER
ADIGRAT
ETHIOPIA
ASSAB
BURE

Above: Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki has been in power since 1993. Known for his prickly disposition, under his leadership Eritrea became a regional pariah

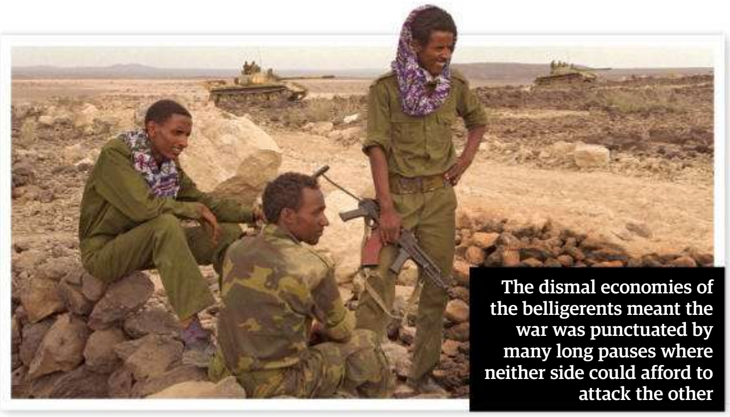
> "It was difficult to ascertain the war's definitive outcome beyond the hysterical propaganda spread by the belligerents"

COUNTING LOSSES

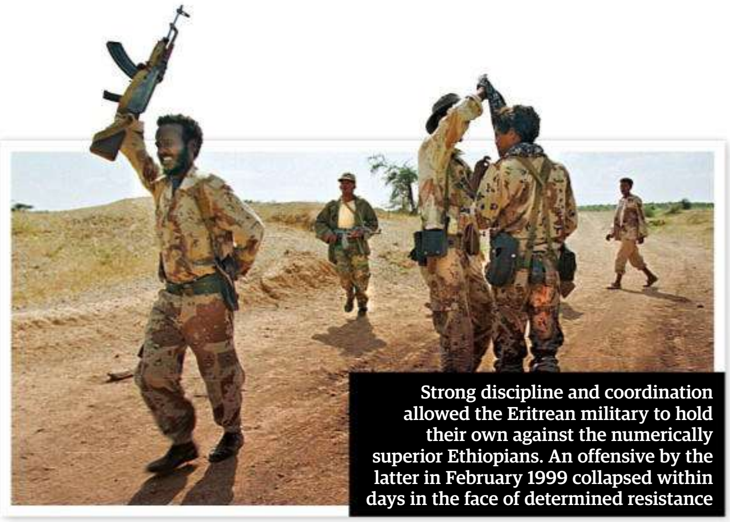
To this day it remains unclear if the conflict should be called the 'Eritrean-Ethiopian War' or vice versa. Which country emerged victorious is still unclear. With press access tightly controlled before the UN finally forced a ceasefire and a peace treaty, it was difficult to ascertain the war's definitive outcome beyond the hysterical propaganda spread by the belligerents.

An even thornier issue is accurate figures for losses on both sides. The Eritreans never hesitated to publicise the immense casualties they inflicted on the Ethiopians during battles from 1998-1999. But the Ethiopian military also insisted Eritrean manpower was so depleted that their border defences almost collapsed.

The UN reports that the war killed 80,000-100,000 and displaced 1 million people. But unverified claims from Ethiopian and Eritrean sources suggest actual losses were two or even three times as high as estimated.



The dismal economies of the belligerents meant the war was punctuated by many long pauses where neither side could afford to attack the other



Strong discipline and coordination allowed the Eritrean military to hold their own against the numerically superior Ethiopians. An offensive by the latter in February 1999 collapsed within days in the face of determined resistance

to haul food and ammunition. Despite the modern weaponry it moved against the Eritreans, the forthcoming battles seemed closer in spirit to the doomed Italian campaigns against the Abyssinian empire in the late 19th century.

In what was named Operation Sunset, on 23 February 1999 thousands of troops were thrown into battle against the Eritreans in the Yirga Triangle, who had put their own knowledge to good use by building elaborate fortifications along the border. After four days of combat, Addis Ababa made sure to inform the international press that the offensive had resulted in an overwhelming victory.

But there was scant evidence of this on the frontlines, which were unchanged. One of the curious encounters of the battle was a minor air engagement. As neither country had sizable air forces, the few jets that were utilised often played cat and mouse over the sun-drenched terrain. In one particular duel, an Ethiopian Su-27 intercepted a MiG-29UB and shot it out of the sky with its cannon. Upon landing, the Sukhoi pilot was hailed for a unique distinction: Captain Aster Tolossa became the first woman to confirm an air-to-air kill in a fighter jet. Distinctions were scarce on the ground, however, as the fighting usually left staggering body counts and murky outcomes.

A much larger assault took place a month after Operation Sunset in a different location 100 kilometres (60 miles) east of the Yirga Triangle. The objective this time was another border settlement named Tsorona. Once again, the Eritreans held fast. A precise account of the events in this battle has yet to surface, but what has been pieced together from disparate reportage offers up a chilling chronicle. Like Operation Sunset before it, the Ethiopians massed their forces and sent them in waves against the enemy. The outcome was grisly, as the Eritreans – young men and women with just weeks of training – witnessed the first human wave get annihilated by land mines. The assaults that followed were mowed down by artillery and machine-gun fire. During the night and early morning the combat moved to close quarters, and when the Eritreans began their counterattack they wiped out the remaining Ethiopian units, including their baggage train of donkeys and horses.

The battle for Tsorona may have seen the complete loss of several Ethiopian divisions. Apparently, the high command in Addis Ababa never conceived a plan of using their attack aircraft, helicopters and tanks to pierce the Eritrean lines. Groups of journalists who were given tours around the Tsorona front witnessed the carnage. Thousands of uncollected bodies were left strewn on the sand and rocks, sometimes piled in dreadful rows, baking under the unforgiving heat. The Ethiopian army didn't have a proper system for collecting its war dead, and the horrific losses were broadcast and published by the world's press agencies.

Both sides were loathe to admit how crucial the Tsorona campaign was. If the Ethiopians had prevailed, their army would have seized the roads leading to Asmara, allowing them to threaten the very existence of the Eritrean state. While the Ethiopian commanders did fail to meet any objective, once a new round of peace talks was opened the Eritreans were more receptive than during the previous year. Owing to the impenetrable propaganda broadcast by Eritrean television and government-controlled newspapers, it's still a matter of speculation if the Eritrean military was indeed broken in Tsorona – having suffered their own crippling losses during the days of hard fighting, and no longer having enough supplies to prosecute the war.

As the months dragged on the Eritreans seemed overjoyed at symbolic instances such as collecting prisoners of war or downing the occasional enemy aircraft. In the middle of 1999 an Ethiopian Mi-24 attack helicopter was destroyed over the eastern border running parallel to the Red Sea. Journalists were immediately transported to the site and shown the burnt wreckage, including the charred bodies of its crew. The Eritrean soldiers present, attired in their motley uniforms, danced around the fallen helicopter and celebrated as if a mortal blow had been dealt to their foes.

A reluctant peace

The fighting did come to a halt after the UN successfully brokered a ceasefire in Algiers on

Old Soviet T-55 medium tanks proved invaluable in the gruelling stalemate of the 1998-2000 war. Both sides used tanks as mobile fortifications to shore up their ever-shifting defensive lines

Eritrean migrants gathered in huge numbers in 'The Jungle' camp in Calais, fleeing poverty and repression in their home country

ERITREAN EXODUS

One of the war's unexpected outcomes was to entrench a peculiar siege mentality in the Eritrean government that led to it imposing indefinite national service. This required all adult citizens to serve in the military for at least 18 months, and often longer. Although national service was useful during the 1998-2000 war, its overall impact on society has been negative.

With so many students and professionals trapped in uniform, the Eritrean state has managed to cripple its economy and free enterprise. The resulting stagnation, matched with often-brutal recruitment practices, left many citizens with no choice but to flee. Eritrean men and women now risk life and limb to reach either Europe or the United States, even if this constitutes a serious brain drain for their homeland. The UNHCR reported that there were 474,296 Eritrean asylum seekers and refugees scattered across the globe in 2015. It's ironic how 165,000 fleeing Eritreans have sought refuge in Ethiopia since the war ended. This exodus is significant considering Eritrea's population is less than five million people.

18 June 2000 and a token unit of peacekeepers arrived in Ethiopia to separate the belligerents. On 12 December that same year a peace agreement was signed, ending the war. An absurd condition of the agreement was keeping the useless arms embargo on Eritrea and Ethiopia in place. In Ethiopia, for example, the embargo was shelved a few years later when Addis Ababa agreed to help the US military pacify Somalia as part of the Bush administration's 'War on Terror'. This meant Ethiopia could import weapons again and even receive free deliveries sanctioned by the US, and had a mandate to send its army abroad.

As part of the Algiers agreement a small peacekeeping force was deployed to Badme and other disputed areas to guarantee that both sides demobilised. The effort had limited success. Even when the Hague ruled that Badme was inside Eritrean territory an Ethiopian garrison remained in the town. This frustrated the work of the 5,000 peacekeepers who formed the UN Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE). The unit's mission was to preserve the Algiers agreement and demilitarise the shared border. But as logistical support from Eritrea and Ethiopia dwindled, so did the project's long term feasibility. UNMEE was ended in 2008, and since then the border has become tense once more.

One of the war's more problematic outcomes is ascertaining who won. To this day, Eritrea insists it emerged victorious because its troops slaughtered thousands of Ethiopians, and Eritrean propaganda claims that armed citizens blunted a full-scale invasion to re-occupy their land. But Eritrea fared worse in the years after the war. Isaias Afwerki's iron grip on the PFDJ allowed him to rule as a dictator for life, and the country embraced a bizarre economic program focused on self-sufficiency. The oppressive national service led to widespread discontent as many Eritreans were torn from their families and jobs, disappearing for years in the dreadful conscription system.

But Ethiopia prospered in the ensuing decades as a magnet for foreign investment and a model of stability in a rough region. It was Eritrea that turned rogue, keeping its army mobilised for years on end and burning its bridges with the international community. In what amounts to a complete failure to reconcile, 20 years after the Badme question neither Asmara or Addis Ababa bothered to convene and establish new borders, which means the same conflict could erupt again at any point.

This already happened in June 2016 when a pitched battle was fought in Tsorona, the same settlement that was the site of the last war's most gruelling battle. The clash couldn't have come at a worse time, as both Eritrea and Ethiopia were - and still are - reeling from domestic troubles. In the latter's case, decades of one-party rule by the EPRDF inflamed tensions between ethnic Amhara and Oromo, who feel they've been harshly marginalised by the current Tigray-dominated government.

In 2018 the spectre of widespread civil unrest spreading across Ethiopia's cities forced the EPRDF to fast-track the rise of a new leader, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who is tasked with charting a way out of the current crisis. Unfortunately, in what amounts to a standard ploy by less-than-democratic regimes, the EPRDF has also assigned some blame to Eritrea for its present troubles.

The ultimate consequence of the bloody two years Ethiopia and Eritrea spent fighting each other was how much was left unresolved despite the losses incurred by each side. Like so many other frozen conflicts, the murky borderlands separating Eritrea and Ethiopia will likely remain a flash point for years to come.

Images: Alamy, Getty

SOUTH SUDAN'S
Brutal Birth

The world's newest nation emerged from five decades of separatist war only to be plagued by renewed ethnic violence that has killed thousands and threatens famine

The latest news from Africa's bloodiest conflict does not bode well for the future. Already the four year conflict, ostensibly between the two largest ethnic groups, the Dinka and Nuer, is creating famine conditions.

In February 2017, General Thomas Cirillo Swaka, a member of the Bari ethnic group, resigned as deputy chief of staff of South Sudan's Army. He has accused President Salva Kiir, a member of the Dinka group, of recruiting militias and engaging in ethnic cleansing. Now Cirillo plans to join the Nuer-dominated rebellion, and some estimates put the number of fighters in his new militia at 30,000, potentially a force for terrible destruction.

In theory, Africa's longest-running civil war ended in 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which allowed autonomy for the ten southernmost states of Sudan.

Bordered by six nations and rich in oil, the region is ethnically diverse; over 60 languages are spoken. Aside from the Dinka and Nuer, the region is inhabited by such groups as the Murle, Luo, Bari Shilluk and Azande.

On 9 July 2011, after six years of autonomy, the world's youngest nation came into being with street parties in every town and jubilation among its 11 million people. But border clashes with Sudan persisted along with internal ethnic clashes. In late 2013, Kiir fired his entire cabinet, accusing his former Nuer deputy Riek Nuer of fomenting a coup against him.

Violence spread out from the capital, Juba as the Dinka-dominated ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) clashed with Riek's largely Nuer SPLM In Opposition (SPLM-IO) and its allied 'White Nuer' militia. Over 400,000 civilians were displaced in the first month of conflict alone. Kiir controversially called in Ugandan troops to assist in suppressing the uprising. Since 2011, approximately 12,500 troops and staff have been deployed as part of the United Nations in South Sudan (UNIMISS).

Although a peace deal was worked out in August 2015, and Riek temporarily rejoined the government as vice president, violence flared in Juba on the eve of the fifth anniversary of independence. Around 300 people, including two UNIMSS staff, were killed and 40,000 displaced. Riek once again fled the capital and resumed leading the SPLM-IO.

At the start of 2017, conservative estimates put the death toll at 100,000. One in three members of the population has been displaced and 1.5 million have fled to neighbouring countries, particularly Uganda; South Sudan has the world's third biggest refugee population after Syria and Afghanistan. In camps for the displaced, an estimated 70 per cent of women have been raped. With famine conditions now reported in some areas, this new African nation has had a truly nightmarish infancy marked by hatred and suffering.

Long road to independence

An old local saying goes: 'Aktul al-abid bil abid' (kill the slave through the slave) and this illustrates how the seeds of the current conflict were planted in the long struggle for independence from the Islamic north. Under Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule, the Muslim north and the Christian and Animist south were ruled as two distinct entities. By 1947 they were unified, but the south has been badly neglected; even today, the new nation has very little infrastructure. Many towns and air strips become inaccessible in the rainy season. One in seven children dies before the age of seven.

Promises by the newly independent Sudan to create a federal system of government were never honoured. The first civil war broke out in 1955

SUDAN'S VIOLENT HISTORY

1956
Sudan becomes independent of Britain. Deep divisions are evident between the Muslim north and the Christian and Animist south. Southern rebellion gets underway.

1969
Military officers led by Colonel Jafaar Mohammed Numeiri seize power in Khartoum. Initially espousing a socialist and Pan African ideology, the regime promises southern autonomy.

1972
A peace deal in Addis Ababa agrees to southern autonomy and ends the first phase of the war. Oil is later discovered in the region.

"Cirillo plans to join the Nuer-dominated rebellion, and some estimates put the number of fighters in his new militia at 30,000, potentially a force for terrible destruction"

SPLA
TIGER DIVISION
ABRAHAM DENG MAKER

Founded as a guerilla movement in 1983, the SPLA is thought to be around 150,000 strong and ended with the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement. Fundamental to the peace was a promise to grant autonomy for the south. But such promises were shelved after oil was discovered near Bentui in the Upper Nile region in 1978. The American company Chevron eventually spent $1 billion on exploration and two large oil fields were established, called Unity and Heglig respectively.

Around the same time, President Jafaar Numeiri sought to consolidate his support among northern Muslims by bringing two prominent Islamic politicians into government. The first was Umma Party leader Sadiq al-Mahdi, great-grandson of the famous Mahdi who had fought the British during the 19th century. The second was Hasan al-Turabi, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and founder of the Islamist National Islamic Front (NIF).

In 1983, Numeiri declared an Islamic revolution, imposing curbs on western fashions and music. On one occasion, he publicly poured $11 million worth of alcohol into the Nile.

A regional government in the south was dissolved and south Sudan split into three regions, effectively terminating the 1972 agreement. Mutinies now broke out in army garrisons in the southern towns of Bor and Pibor. Many southern troops deserted and regrouped across the eastern border in Ethiopia, where they formed the SPLM.

The SPLM was led by Colonel John Garang de Maboir, a Dinka officer with a doctorate in agricultural economics from Iowa State University and military training at Fort Benning Georgia. But Garang sought not southern succession but the creation of a secular socialist regime for all of Sudan.

He found many willing recruits for his military wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and remarked that: "The marginal cost of rebellion in the south became very small, zero or negative; that is, it pays to rebel."

This was no glib remark. As with other African conflicts, foreign powers were quick to intervene. The Ethiopian Mengistu Haile Mariam and Libyan Muammar Gaddafi regimes backed the SPLM in revenge for Khartoum's sponsorship of separatist and opposition groups on their soil. Despite its grim reputation for human rights violations, Washington poured aid into Numeiri's regime to the tune of $1.5 billion as a bulwark against the pro-Soviet Ethiopian junta and the reviled Gaddafi.

During the 1980s, the Sudanese regime attempted to boost agricultural production by investing heavily in mechanization. But the effort back-fired and the nation accumulated debts of $12 billion. Drought struck in 1983-84, causing mass hunger. This hastened the overthrow of Numeiri in 1986, bringing to power Sadiq al-Mahdi as prime minister. As the head of a northern coalition, he was fully committed to the further 'Islamisation' of Sudan.

Not surprisingly, the SPLM refused to enter a ceasefire. Thus Sadiq's regime armed Baggara Arab militias from western Sudan. Known as murahalin, they were licensed to attack Dinka and Nuer areas. By this time, Chevron had ceased its activities at Unity and Heglig. The oil fields were largely in Dinka and Nuer areas and the murahalin committed ethnic cleansing in the territories around them.

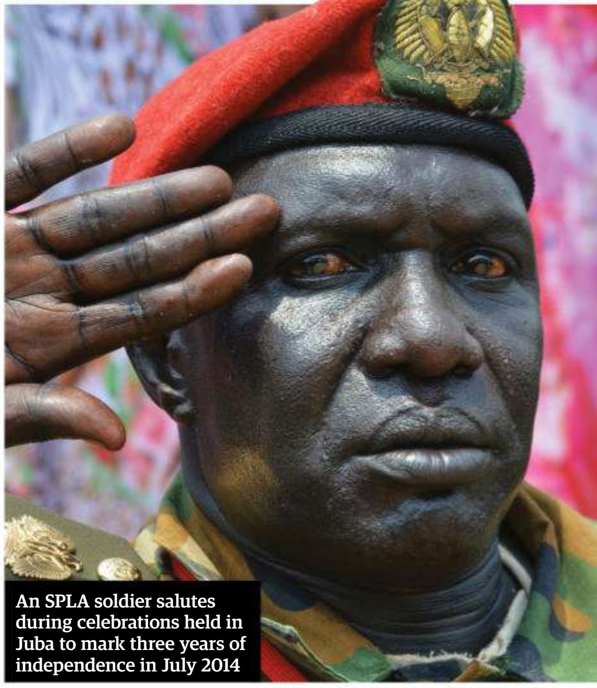
The predominantly Dinka SPLM was opposed by rival factions that acted both independently and with Khartoum's support. Among the Nuer, some factions supported the SPLM and others opposed it. The consequence of such internecine warfare was entirely predictable. In 1988, Sudan was wracked by the worst famine seen in modern times. At least 250,000 people perished due to starvation and three million were displaced.

Food was used as a weapon of war. Both sides attacked cattle herds, destroyed crops and blocked convoys of foreign aid. When aid did get through to the south, it was frequently commandeered by SPLA guerillas. Combined with the military aid they were already receiving, the SPLM soon controlled much of the southern countryside. With the army forced back into garrison towns, Sadiq was forced to negotiate with Garang. This was too much for Islamic hardliners in the north and the Army was discontent with his handling of the war: a coup took place on 30 June 1989 that put General Omar al-Bashir in power.

Enter Riek Machar

The SPLM-IO leader, Riek Machar has described himself as "a political animal" whose formative years witnessed the "betrayal" of the South after the failed peace of 1972. He was born in 1952, the 26th son of a village headman in Ler, Unity State in the Upper Nile region. Attending college in the UK in the 1980s, he married his first wife Angelina, now a prominent politician.

By 1984 he had relocated to Ethiopia to be trained by John Garang. But he was leery of Garang's ideological project, which essentially involved emulating the Marxism of his Ethiopian patron, Colonel Mengistu. In August 1991, Machar and two other SPLA commanders, Lam Akol and Gordon Kong, attempted to seize control of the



An SPLA soldier salutes during celebrations held in Juba to mark three years of independence in July 2014

1983
In response to growing Islamic influence, the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SPLM) renews the separatist struggle led by John Garang. Ethiopia and Libya provide military support.

30 June 1989
With famine raging and the SPLM gaining ground in the south, General Omar al-Bashir stages a coup. Splits form within the SPLM over the movement's objectives.

August 1991
Nuer commander Riek Machar and others attempt to seize control of the SPLM. Thousands of ethnic Dinka are slaughtered by Riek's brutal forces in Bor that November.

July 2002
Under the terms of the Machakos Protocol signed in Keyna, the South is granted the right to self-determination. Riek Machar rejoins the SPLM.

January 2005
The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is signed, which allows for a six year period of autonomy ahead of a ballot on full independence. Disputes over the oil-rich border areas ensue.

The body of a dead rebel killed by South Sudanese soldiers lies next to a wrecked military vehicle near Bor Airport

South Sudan has one of the most heavily armed populations on Earth, with weapons flooding in from around the world

movement. Known as the SPLA-Nasir faction, after their main stronghold, the split turned Dinka-Nuer tensions into outright war. Weeks later, Machar's forces slaughtered over 2,000 Dinka in the town of Bor and displaced 100,000 more. Once again warfare and famine wiped out thousands.

By 1997 Machar had broken away from the SPLM altogether and reached an accommodation with Khartoum, forming his own independent militia. There were hints of a share in oil revenues should a lasting peace be realized in the South.

Meanwhile, Sudan's neighbours were becoming alarmed by Bashir's vision of international Jihad. Since Uganda acted as a conduit for most of the arms to Garang's forces, Bashir's regime funnelled money to the odious Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony. This militia kidnapped and brutalised children, forcing them to participate in further attacks throughout rural Uganda.

After the 9/11 attacks, Bashir found himself under even more pressure from the Bush administration to curb Islamic radicalism. Sudan had been a haven for the Osama bin-Laden in the early 1990s before his departure for Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

The same month as the attacks, Bush appointed the former Missouri Senator John Danforth as his special envoy in Sudan. The peace process was criticised at the time as focusing too much on the NIF-dominated government and the SPLM and excluding other factions. But by 2002, the year a protocol was signed in Machakos, southern Kenya, 2 million South Sudanese were dead and 4 million displaced. The Machakos Protocol allowed for a ceasefire and a ballot on independence.

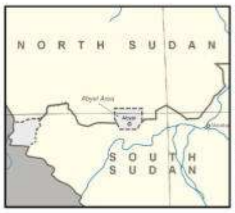
Thus, in January 2005 the CPA was signed and a six year period of autonomy commenced. It ended with scenes of national exhilaration in July 2011 after 98 per cent of the electorate voted to secede. But the joy was tempered by the loss of Garang, killed in 2005 when the Ugandan Mi-172 helicopter returning him from a meeting with his long-time ally Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, crashed near the Kenyan border.

Troubled independence

Like many other resource-rich nations, the discovery of oil has almost seemed more of a curse than a blessing. In the late 1990s, the Khartoum government arranged for the setting up of a new oil consortium called the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company. In defiance of southern objectives it did not set up a new refinery on Southern soil but built a 1,540-kilometre pipeline to a specially constructed Red Sea marine port. Since

August 2005
SPLM leader John Garang, recently sworn in as first vice president, dies in a helicopter crash while returning from Uganda.

March 2008
Arab militias from Sudan and the SPLA clash over the oil-rich Abyei region, an area disputed since the signing of the CPA.



9 July 2011
South Sudan becomes the world's youngest nation after 98 per cent of the population vote for independence. Salva Kiir Mayardit is elected president.

6 May 2012
A peace conference convenes in Bor following several years of intermittent clashes between the Murle, Lou-Nuer and Dinka groups.

July 2013
President Kiir dismisses the cabinet, having stripped Riek of powers as his deputy. Key SPLM party structures are dissolved in November.

15 December 2013
Clashes erupt in the capital Juba between Dinka and Nuer fighters. Kiir accuses Riek and others of attempting a coup.

independence, South Sudan has accused Sudan of charging exorbitant transport costs for use of the pipeline. The fighting has caused oil production to decline by one-third since 2013.

Moreover, under the terms of the CPA, there would supposedly be a referendum on secession for two disputed areas still held by Sudan: the provinces of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, along with the oil-rich Abyei regions. But the votes have been repeatedly postponed and clashes between the two armies have taken place in Abyei.

To make matters worse, the period leading up to the outbreak of the civil war was characterised by endemic corruption by Kiir's regime. An independent report in 2012 estimated that at least $4 billion in government funds had simply disappeared into the ether.

The SPLA military hierarchy continued to dominate government. South Sudan's political culture was weakened by the lack of an effective opposition and a constitution that was unclear about the distribution of power among the various government departments.

And so it was that in December 2013 a political struggle within the movement degenerated into outright warfare.

Ethnic clashes and a failed peace

On 16 December 2013, President Kiir addressed the nation on television. Significantly, he had swapped his trademark suit and cowboy hat for military fatigues. He announced that a coup led by Riek Machar had been foiled and that the plotters had also included John Garang's widow, Rebecca Nyandeng de Maboir. The initial rebellion had begun four days earlier when gunmen clashed with the Presidential Guard in Juba. Kiir's generals then ordered the 'Tiger' battalion to disarm, but once this happened weapons stores were raided by Dinka soldiers. The SPLA split along ethnic lines and Nuer soldiers occupied the capital's military headquarters before being dislodged.

Fighting raged around Juba throughout December and 13,000 civilians took refuge in two UNIMISS compounds there. Kiir declared a state of emergency in Jonglei and Unity State, where the SPLM-IO held the capitals. By January, the town of Bor had changed hands three times between the government and rebels.

By now three V-22 Osprey aircraft were airlifting US nationals from Bor. Fighting erupted in Malakal and Bentiu in January 2014 as the first attempt at a ceasefire was negotiated with the help of an eight-

Along with weapons built in Sudan, arms have been imported from Israel, China, and South Africa among other states

> "In April, the SPLM-IO captured Bentiu and went from house to house, separating Dinka from other groups and slaughtering them"

January 2014
A ceasefire is signed but it is repeatedly broken over the next few weeks. Hundreds of thousands of people are displaced. Fighting spreads outside of Juba.

15 April 2014
Nuer forces massacre hundreds of civilians in Bentiu after capturing the town. Riek Machar denies the SPLM-IO were responsible.

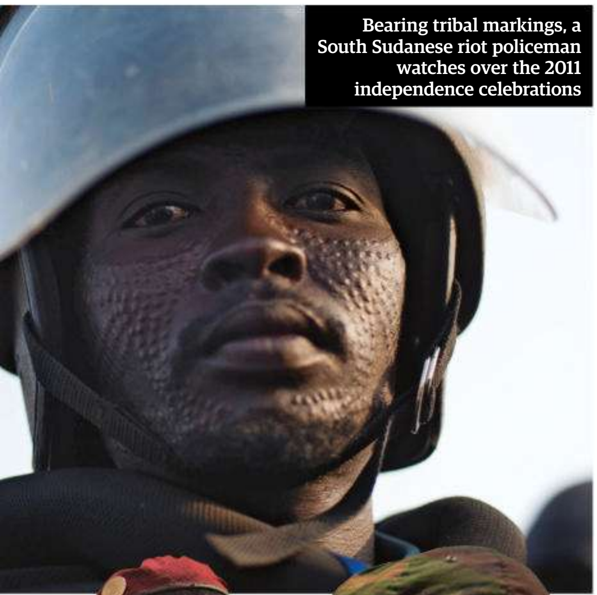
August 2014
Peace talks begin in Ethiopia but drag on for weeks over the conditions for a transitional government of national unity.

16 May 2015
Assisted by the Shilluk warlord Johnson Olony, the SPLM-IO capture the second largest city, Malakal, and destroy most of its infrastructure.

April 2016
Riek Machar returns to Juba following a peace deal and is sworn in as vice president. By July, amid further violence, he is again sacked.

November 2016
The UN Secretary General sacks the Kenyan commander of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) over the failure to protect civilians during the Juba clashes.

December 2016
A UN commission of human rights concludes that ethnic cleansing is occurring throughout South Sudan, although the government vehemently denies this.



Bearing tribal markings, a South Sudanese riot policeman watches over the 2011 independence celebrations

SPLA soldiers occupied Sudan's main oil field at Heglig for ten days in April 2012, nearly triggering a wider conflict

20 February 2017

The United Nations declares famine conditions are afflicting Unity State and spreading to other areas. Up to 5.5 million people, half of the population, may experience food shortages within six months.

nation African trade bloc known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

In April, the SPLM-IO captured Bentiu and went from house to house, separating Dinka from other groups before mercilessly slaughtering them. They also killed civilians found sheltering in a hospital, mosque and Catholic church.

The horrendous brutality of the SPLM-IO prompted two commanders, Gabriel Tang and Peter Gadet, to realign with Kiir after August 2015, although Tang was killed in an ambush in early 2017. Another militia, the South Sudan Democratic Movement, drawn from the Murle group, also rose in rebellion although its leader, David Yau Yau, who later reconciled with Kiir in return for Murle autonomy in Pibor State. However, a splinter group known as the 'Cobra' faction has allied itself with Riek Machar since September 2016.

In August 2015, again with IGAD mediation, a peace deal was worked out: Uganda agreed to withdraw its troops and Riek Machar was offered the post of vice president. But over the next few months, Kiir appointed staunch loyalists to his cabinet. His plan to increase the number of states from ten to 28 caused tensions with the Shilluk and Azande groups.

By July 2016 violence returned to Juba, and two months later Machar again called for the SPLM-IO to take up arms against Kiir. Throughout 2016-17 fighting has spread through the Equatoria and Greater Upper Nile regions. In addition to the original rebellion, there is now increasing violence within the Nuer community between those loyal to Riek Machar and those supporting his replacement as vice president, Tabang Deng Gai, also a Nuer.

Famine

Already afflicted by two years of drought, famine conditions in Unity State were reported by the UN in February 2017. UN officials have also accused Kiir's regime of blocking attempts to deliver food aid, a charge the President denies. In any case, attempting to mediate peace or conduct a humanitarian operation has been difficult and dangerous

A possible way forward could be the renegotiation of the 2005 CPA, this time worked out to be more inclusive and far-sighted. The removal of the two antagonists, Riek Machar and Salva Kiir, also seems imperative. The former is now in exile in South Africa, and although there is talk of disillusionment with his rule of the SPLM-IO, and with the rebels running out of weapons, there are enough ethnic opportunists like Carillo to reignite the violence. Salva Kiir, meanwhile, has postponed a 2015 election for at least three years.

When South Sudan became independent in 2011, amid justifiable optimism and joy, the new nation adopted *South Sudan Oyee* as its national anthem. Contained in the song are the lines: "South Sudan/The land of great abundance/Uphold us united in peace and harmony."

While there is no doubting the country's potential abundance, peace and harmony remain a long way off.

DANGEROUS MISSION

SINCE DECEMBER 2013 AT LEAST **79** AID WORKERS HAVE BEEN KILLED BY REBELS OR GOVERNMENT FORCES

2 CHINESE UN PEACEKEEPERS WERE KILLED IN A ROCKET ATTACK IN JULY 2016 IN JUBA

26 AUGUST 2014

3 RUSSIANS KILLED WHEN REBELS SHOT DOWN A MI-8 HELICOPTER

JULY 2016

5 INTERNATIONAL AID WORKERS GANG RAPED WHEN DOZENS OF SPLA SOLDIERS ENTERED THE TERRAIN HOTEL IN JUBA

Images: Alamy, Getty

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Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

History of Africa First Edition (AHB5065)
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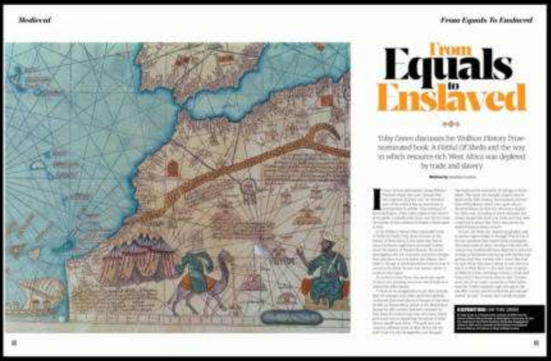
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